





WITHDRAWN





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BOOKS BY
Cameron Rogers

THE MAGNIFICENT IDLER
COLONEL BOB INGERSOLL
DRAKE'S QUEST
THE LEGEND OF CALVIN COOLIDGE
GALLANT LADIES
FULL AND BY
CYRANO

C y r a n o

Cyrano

Swordsman,

Libertin,

and

Man-of-Letters

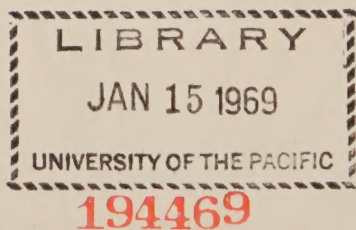
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ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE ILLIAN

by CAMERON ROGERS

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FIRST EDITION

FOR
Sherman
Alan
and
Eliot

*Bon jour, bon an, bonne semaine,
Honneur, santé, joye prochaine,
Persévérer de bien en mieulx
Et joye d'amours vous doint Dieux.*



Foreword

IN THE month of August, 1927, I found myself in Gascony, a part of France intimately connected with the histories of great Frenchmen since the days when Henry of Béarn, Henry IV of glorious memory, deceived his best friends and worst enemies by riding in a morning to the taking of Cahors and building upon the bloody ruins of the Valois a dynasty regnant for two hundred years. With the Bourbons in the Louvre, Paris became filled with Gascons, and, finding myself in the sandy, sunny spaces from which these had come, I remembered Rostand's colossal figure, Cyrano, the complete, the superb, the perfect Gascon. So, without thinking further save to remember that even Gauthier had declared him to have been native to the town the name of which he bore, I invested Bergerac. And from Bergerac, bewildered, I went northward to Paris and applied myself to the works of Remy de Gourmont and to those of an erudite person named Brun, and these in turn led me to sources

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which compelled a strict attendance in the manuscript room of the Bibliothèque Nationale, where an aged viscount instructed me in cursive handwritings three centuries old. After some months of this I saw Cyrano, but a Cyrano whose existence was recorded, not solely in the work of a great Romanticist, but in contemporary documents and writings inscribed by men who had known Monsieur de Bergerac and written of him as they had felt, the majority unkindly.

What follows, then, is based upon fact, fact purged of bias instilled by men who had reserved their revenges for a time when the subject of their memoirs might no longer put sword in hand to their extreme and even fatal discomfiture. Monsieur de Bergerac was actually, in point of origin, experience, and humours, as this work describes him to have been. A man of singular and violent obsessions, he nevertheless composed the finest, even the noblest, epitome of his times and of the strange society in which he moved, and he remains memorable not alone because of a distinguished play. In himself he is worthy of a vigorous immortality, and that even if in existence he was not precisely the Gascon cadet edified forever into life by Edmond Rostand.

CAMERON ROGERS.



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Cyrano

Prologue

A YOUNG man wearing apparel which had once been excellent emerged from the tap room of the cabaret of La Galère in the Rue Saint-Thomas-du-Louvre. He was engaged to wait upon his father, whose house stood in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, across the river, in fact, across the city, and he was in haste. But as a Parisian born he knew that the traffic of Paris streets in the year 1639 would not permit him, a bourgeois, a clear way to his destination, so that he was prepared for checks and accepted them with a tolerant philosophy. Indeed, he had to. Before getting free of the Rue Saint-Thomas-du-Louvre he found himself in a small army of lacqueys who, stationed before the Hôtel Rambouillet, disputed the wall with pedestrians and jostled those who made to pass them. So the young man admired for a thousandth time the clean brick and slate, the freestone cornices and friezes, architraves and pilasters, of the Hôtel Rambouillet, within which, he had been honestly in-

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formed, sat perpetually enthroned in a salon painted blue, with stars, and a moon, sun, and signs of the Zodiac executed in gold, Madame la marquise herself, the notable Egeria of the age. The young man had never seen Catherine de Vivonne, Marquise de Rambouillet, but at this time he was passionately of her disciples. So much so that he refused to barter harsh words with the lacqueys and had come to the Rue Saint-Honoré where a passing carriage drenched him with mud—sewer mud, since all streets were sewers—before he had resumed his normal temper, which was choleric.

The traffic was now grown more impenetrable than before. He was a half hour before the Church of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, opposite the square court of the Louvre, being trodden by the vulgar, who would not go upon their business until they had scrutinized every detail of the equipments of the Seigneurs who were now taking leave of the Presence. Finally, when one of these, in the midst of a great press of gentlemen, was mounted and prepared to ride, they shouted all together, "*Enghien! Ah, le beau Prince,*" and went away as cheerfully as children after fair day, allowing the young man to proceed to the Pont-Neuf. But on the Pont-Neuf he was constantly impeded. Girls offered their bosoms for

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his inspection and cursed him when he hurried on. A fat man bearing in one hand a pitcher and in the other a glass pursued him pitilessly, howling that brandy rejoiced the heart. Another screeched in his ear that he was the sole purveyor of sweet cherries and still another detained him to declare that he sold chestnuts round and hot as the Devil's eyeballs. A fellow rendered eyeless by the ravages of a filthy disease sought to sell him doves the while, miraculously, he cut the purse of a passing clerk. But the young man answered always violently in the negative and hastened on. He knew his Pont-Neuf.

Arrived at the Place Dauphine he cast a look over his shoulders towards the clock of the Samaritaine, the great hydraulic pump on the second pillar of the bridge upon the side of the Louvre. A crowd of idlers stood about the Samaritaine, inspecting with rapt attention the carillon which now was playing that known air which names in a minor melody certain cities in the Beauce:

*"Orléans, Beaugency,
Notre Dame de Cléry,
Vendôme, Vendôme."*

Suddenly the hour struck, beaten out by a mannequin of bronze, and though the Paris air

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was always loud with the sound of thousands of church bells the young man marked the strokes. "*Vertudieu!*" he exclaimed and instantly collided with a creature in chamois who, without a word, opened a mouth disclosing a cavernous gullet, extending at the same time in his direction a pair of appalling pincers. At this lucid pantomime the young man lost his temper. "*Imbécile!*" he clamoured. "I keep my teeth. Way, way, in God's name, I have duties."

The dentist smacked his lips. He made a familiar gesture with his fingers and waved his instrument. He lifted his voice and broke into song.

*"Tutaine, tuton, tutaine,
Tutu,
Pour fair cocu,
Ton, ton,
Monsieur Ribaudon,
Tutaine, tuton, tutaine.'"*

He ended in a bellow and the young man, to whom the vaudeville was known, laughed with him. "*Peste!*" he said. "I am not yet so fortunate." He made to pass, then leaped into the air and joined the dentist in an insistent outcry, "Sow's son, have a care. Take heed, great pig, take heed!"

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A doctor, pushing his jennet at a gallop toward the Palace, had nearly smothered them both in a rank cloud of the dung and nastiness that covered to a depth of a foot the flooring of the bridge. The young man wiped his eyes, stepped tranquilly over the torso of a man who, armless and legless, lay on his back inviting Christians to drop coins into his mouth, and pursued his way.

Just ahead of him there walked with a little swagger a broad-shouldered individual in the livery of the Cardinal's guards. This soldier was placing his feet with some care, and for a minute the young man wondered. Then he saw that the Cardinal's man was walking upon the shadow of another, a man clad in the sable and gold of the musketeers of the King's Guards. The young man bated his pace. It was not always wise to tread upon shadows. A minute passed, perhaps two, and the musketeer stopped in his tracks. Without turning, he said softly, "Insolent children should be beaten." The guardsman replied, glancing idly at the river below, "Fools also profit by chastisement. Let us say the Pré-aux-Clercs." The musketeer dropped a gauntlet. Picking it up he observed, "Understood. Bring a sword if you can use one. I shall employ a cane." He walked on while the guardsman whistled an

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air favoured in cabarets of the neighbourhood of the Palais-Cardinal.

*“Pliez baggages, mes pauvres messieurs,
Voilà les gardes de Richelieu.”*

The young man hoped briefly that the musketeer would survive. Like most young men he was not liege to Richelieu, the Cardinal-Duke, though it was incontestable that he had more than once saved the kingdom in spite of Louis XIII, whose only passions, it was said, were for what Messire Tallemant des Réaux called the *ragoût* of Italy and symptoms of sudden death or fatal illness in his friends.

The musketeer, the guardsman, and the young man emerged finally upon the Quai des Augustins, and the young man turned to his left and made northward toward the Place Maubert. In the Rue Galande he hugged the wall with a desperation of purpose born of experience. The slops hurled from upper windows to swell the sewerage in the street made a sort of rancid veil before his eyes and, overshooting him, aroused sulphurous complaints beyond. He genuflected mechanically as a funeral passed him, the priest mumbling the penitential psalms, and a choir boy ringing his bell. Two men bore upon their

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shoulders the corpse of the deceased, which was innocent of cerements or coffin. Wound precariously in a sheet, head dangling horribly, and poor emaciated limbs naked to the world, it was borne upon its way to the Charnel House of the Innocents to the accompaniment of loud groans uttered periodically by its bearers for the edification of the multitude. Pious by training, since not for nothing had Paris fought for ten years under the League, the passers-by gave the meagre cortège a moment's prayer, but with this the young man dispensed. He was exceptional to this rule of universal piety, but nevertheless he conformed in some show of obeisance before dusting off his knees and darting into the open door of a cabaret.

He had need of wine before attending upon his father.

The cabaret bore over its door a sign which depicted the birth of the Goddess Minerva and within presented the characteristic appearance of all cabarets of the day. A long room, low ceiled with timbers from which hung hams and other cured meats, panelled in wood smoked black as charcoal, was reasonably filled with a few soldiers and more bourgeois who sat chairs to rough tables and nursed leathern cups of liquor. At the far end of this chamber was a huge fireplace in which

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roared a great flame and in which, upon revolving spits, roasted three or more haunches of beef. To the right of this hearth was a circular staircase which led to the dining room above, and again, above that, to the bedrooms of resident guests. To the left was another staircase which led down to the cellarage, though three walls of the tap room were themselves lined with tiered casks from which, at order, boys were perpetually drawing wine. The young man, skipping in, cried "*Anjou*" and fell to wiping his face with the forearm piece of a green satin glove. The month was May, and the cookery at one end of the long room fiercely abetted the seasonable warmth. He had his cup from a tap boy, swallowed it in three gulps, flipped the lad a small coin, and was out again upon the street.

He had, he estimated, already exceeded the time of his appointment by an hour. He stood for a minute by the wall, then suddenly coughed and clapped a hand to his nose. From the Place de Grève directly opposite the Place Maubert but upon the Right Bank of the Seine an unchancy breeze had swept, over the pile of Notre Dame, the reek of rotting bodies, quartered and nailed to the four corners of bloody scaffolding. The young man spat without relinquishing his nose and mended his pace down the Rue Galande. It was,

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he had often thought, disgusting to foul the city's air with anatomical remains and those loathsome tubs which, containing the poor devils' viscera, were allowed to stand apparently forever in the very core of crowded faubourgs. Only last week he had seen a counterfeiter strapped upon a great wheel and his arms, thighs, and shins smashed to a purple pulp by a great Breton executioner who had wielded his prodigious iron bar as though it had been a willow wand. What had then remained of the counterfeiter had been hanged in chains and doubtless was still hanging, making a great stench in the populous midst of Paris.

Out of breath and in heated disarray, the young man was come at last into sight of his father's house. He paused and put some order to his clothes. He did not look forward to seeing his father who was, he believed, an ignoble old man both miserly and unjust. Toward the cadet of his two sons, and this cadet the young man had the misfortune to be, he had, certainly, shown only these disagreeable characteristics. But the young man was determined, this once at least, to assert himself.

He advanced at a walk, as nearly as possible dignified, to the parental door. "*Sangdieu*," he lamented, "I pant like Vulcan's bellows." He knocked. After a time he heard footsteps, and

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the door was opened a few inches. The young man immediately threw his weight against it and bawled in as imperative a tone as he could muster: "Inform Monsieur de Mauvières that Monsieur de Bergerac is come to see him."

Then, without ceasing to lean against the door, he mopped his face again with the forearm piece of a green satin glove. "Old wolf," he said gloomily to himself, "be at least just to your whelps."

The Swordsmen



Chapter i

THE CIRANO

WHEN he was twenty years of age and to be seen about the town, ruffling on the Pont-Neuf or gaming at the cabaret of the Croix de Lorraine, acquaintance took Monsieur de Bergerac to be a Gascon and associated him with memorable Frenchmen. The old proverb of the South which declares that

*"Lo no es bon guasconet
Se no sabe dexi
Higue, hogue, hagasset"*

might have dissipated this reputation of his origin, and indeed even the tap boys who served

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his pleasure in the matter of wines were often astonished at the Parisian idiom of his speech. His intimates knew him, of course, for what he was, the cadet of a bourgeois family which owed the particule to patronage and its titles to its capacity for menial service, but for many years the myth of his Gascon gentility was current in the faubourgs.

Savinien de Cyrano, titular Seigneur de Bergerac, knew perfectly well the history of his ancestors and was sensitive in their regard. At twenty he despised his father and was inclined to solitude and melancholy, insisting on his dignity as a gentleman but chary of genealogical gossip. His origin, he knew, far from being Gascon, was Italianate, and his name, until his father's time spelled Cirano, was familiar to Bergamo and not to Pau or Béarn. His grandfather, Savinien Cirano, had come by way of Umbria and Marseilles into France in the train of Catherine de' Medici and, by the favour shown by that princess to her countrymen, had been recommended to the protection of the Guise. When the greatest duke of that House was quitting the bed upon which Francis I lay noisily dying, to say with his bitter grin to Catherine, "He's going, he's going, the gallant," Savinien Cirano was in monseigneur's tail without, wait-

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ing to hold his stirrup when he rode away. With the Guise all powerful, Cirano became a man of substance and was important to the Duke and to the Duke's eldest son, spying, boot-licking, pimping, an oily, shrewd-minded illiterate Italian townsman, half pander, half buffoon. But he was, in his way, able and loyal to his kinsmen, who in time came into France and became men both of the robe and of the sword under Catherine's diseased and vicious children, the kings Francis II, Charles IX, and Henry III.

Staunch Guisard that he was, Cirano received in payment for services rendered a patent, possibly spurious, of nobility with the prerogative of the particule and the grants of two demesnes. The châteaux of Mauvières and Bergerac were both of the appanage of Chevreuse, which was held by the Guise and embellished by them, during the wars of the League, at the expense of small families devoted to Coligny or to Sully and Henry of Navarre. Bergerac, for an example, was ravished by Henry the Slashed from an authentic Gascon family of that name and came eventually to Cirano, who dared not add its nomination as suffix to his name lest its true possessor appear one day and assassinate him. But he caused himself to be called Savinien de Cirano, Seigneur de Mauvières, and when he died that

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title descended to his son. This son, Abel de Cirano, lacked much of his sire's ability and all of his good fortune. Henry the Slashed, last Duke of Guise but one, was hacked to death in the King's corridor at Blois, and so the Cirano found themselves without a protector in an unsettled time when most men were their enemies. Abel managed to cause his rights to Mauvières and Bergerac to be verified in 1598, but he sold them a few years later to gentlemen who had served Henry IV against Mayenne, brother to the murdered Guise, and he was cheaply rid of them. Under Henry III he might have been despoiled of them without any payment as a partisan of a house inimical to the King, but Henry IV was weary of rapine. So, though he remained Seigneur de Mauvières, Abel de Cirano was a landless man, neither of the robe nor of the sword, and he retired to Paris, where he lived timorously in a little house in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques.

Never valiant nor personable, he was, even in his prime, a sloven in attire, mean-minded, and addicted to a sort of stealthy lechery with the maidservants of his household. As he grew older he went seldom abroad, and the bourgeois among whom he lived, seeing armorial bearings over his door, nourished a pathetic pride in the fact

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that an authentic Seigneur had chosen their faubourg for his residence. In appearance he was withered as though he had no marrow in his bones. His sparse hair he wore short in the style of Henry III, and in his youth he had emulated another fashionable custom of that reign by enlivening his complexion with paint. He had a thin face, very sallow, and a fine nose not unlike that of the Bourbon. His eyes were small and cunning, his mouth slack, and his hands and feet were large and badly formed and betrayed his Bergamot ancestry.

Married to a lady of moderate pretense to gentility, Espérance Belanger, he had five sons and two daughters. Three sons, Denys, Antoine, and Honoré, died in infancy, and only Abel and Savinien survived. The girls were hardy, a fact which grieved him, since it implied expenditure for dowers, and he was in his later days an acknowledged miser. As the only patrimony he intended for the cadet of his sons, Savinien, he procured his right to be known as Seigneur de Bergerac, though the boy never saw the demesne so titled and probably would have preferred a less empty inheritance. Abel the senior in time inherited his own distinction, that of the equally barren appellation of Seigneur de Mauvières. For the rest, he let his sons shift largely for them-

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selves, though he favoured his namesake to the injury of the cadet. He had changed by now the spelling of his name, applied for a coat of arms the composition of which was agonizing to Monsieur de Bergerac, who knew them to bear no relation to the virtue of his ancestry, and insisted that the qualification "*noble homme*" be affixed after his signature on all legal documents to which he set his hand. His gentility was, in fact, his mania, and so long as the simple bourgeois among whom he lived called him Monsieur de Mauvières he was content. When Monsieur de Bergerac was a child his father would bid him repeat his heraldic bearings and would beat him if he mistold them. On a field azure a chevron, *argent*, between two fleeces, *or*; in base, a lion *rampant* of the second; crest, an armed arm embowed, holding a sword proper; count's coronet and casque, and in support, two lions *rampant gardant*, *or*, came to constitute Monsieur de Bergerac's only paternal instruction.

Indeed, his infancy remained always detestable in his memory. He had been put to school in the country where a village curé beat him with more severity than did his father, for failing to learn lessons less interesting, even, than heraldry. He beat him for consorting with lacqueys, for being intimate with a solemn little boy named

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Henri Le Bret, for admiring Bouteville the duelist, and Bassompierre the complete courtier. He beat him on all pretexts, and when Monsieur de Bergerac was twelve years old he fell foul of him for expressing a desire to be one of the fellowship of Porte-Royale in the fields. Whereupon the boy pushed his oppressor down upon the ground, kicked him in the face, and with the intentness of a baby eagle at its dinner, fell in his turn to beating the curé with his own switch. For this enormity he was returned to the Faubourg Saint-Jacques and recommended for a dungeon in the Grand-Châtelet, but the culprit escaped all further punishment. He had the wit to complain to his father that he had been chastised as though he had been a little bourgeois and not a little noble, and Monsieur de Mauvières had been instantly furious against the curé. He had placed his son in the college of Beauvais, of which one Jean Grangier, a notable pedant, was principal, and had congratulated him upon his pride of race.

It was incredible to the boy De Bergerac how many colleges there were in Paris in 1631. There were those of D'Harcourt, Cardinal-Lemoine, Montaigu, Plessis, Calvi, Lisieux, Fortet, La Marche, Des Grassins, Navarre, Notre-Dame-des-dix-huit, Bons-Enfants, Cholets, Bayeux,

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Laon, Narbonne, Cornouailles, Tréguier and Léon, Arras, Bourgogne, Tours, Herbaut, Autun, Cambrai, Saint-Michel, Reims, and a dozen more, including that of Beauvais, each one of them housing a few students, more pensioners, and a great number of masters who fought for benefices and sinecures and paid little attention to their pupils. It having been certified that Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac had been born on March 6, 1619, in the Rue des Deux-Portes (now Rue Dussoubs) in the city of Paris, and baptized at Saint-Sauveur, he was admitted under the tutelage of Maître Grangier and was not backward in perceiving the corrupt administration of the College of Beauvais.

Grangier instructed but little, and that perfunctorily. Becoming principal in 1615 he had honestly attempted reforms, but since he engaged the support of no colleagues in other institutions he saw that to thus continue was to jeopardize his credit and so followed the example of his fellows and neglected his duties to better his condition. He mulcted the wealthier of his students of their allowances in return for privileges forbidden in the college charter, begged moneys from pious noblemen to improve the Fourteenth Century foundation of the sainted Jean de Dormans, cardinal *in partibus* and Bishop of Beau-

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vais, then pouched the proceeds of his solicitations or lent them on usurious terms. He had been a sound scholar, but he preferred luxury to the claustral simplicity of a life of learning, and though some of his students got their classics and sciences in spite of him, more were graduated into the world knowing nothing save vices.

To Monsieur de Bergerac, who sat under him for six years, he was a figure of loathsome absurdity. A big man badly made, his teeth gone, his hair sparse, his person filthy, he filled the boy with disgust and with rage because he received and never gave. The cadet of Cyrano was become in his teens a rapacious scholar and was ripe for instruction, but though he would now have made an excellent pupil, enthusiastic, imaginative, and retentive, the teacher never taught. A Latin quotation or two, a sonorous invocation to the Muses phrased in Greek, a bidding to observe the traditional exhortation of the college, "*ad Deum adeunto mature; atque caste; Sacrificio Missae, Vespertinisque precationibus, omnes, meridianis et serotinis etiam omnes intersunto*"—etc., and Grangier's lectures were over for the day and the boy De Bergerac left cheated of his passion to proceed in erudition and the enlightenment of the sages.

For so to proceed had become with him no

less than a passion. It was his singular ambition, one that remained with him throughout his lifetime, to be learned in schools in a day when few if any gentlemen esteemed learning, save if they were cadets designed by an invariable tradition for the robe, and they then were satisfied with a cursory comprehension of the law and the doctrines of the fathers. This ambition grew in time to be a dual one, complicated, as it shortly became, by an imperative inclination to be the first swordsman in the kingdom; but at Beauvais the entire application of his mind was for his books. It is possible that in this he betrayed the instinct of two ancestors who had rebelled against trade in Bergamo and taken themselves to Bologna and the profession of Marcello Malpighi, after which they had themselves professed the study of anatomy in Italy and died in the Maremma of that fever which they had gone thither to diagnose. But in any case, Monsieur de Bergerac did not much examine the reasons for his impulse. He had been enrolled at Beauvais in order that he might become knowledgeable, and now a windy rogue denied him this result and he was forced to a resented idleness.

But from Beauvais Monsieur de Mauvières would not remove his son. Grangier treated the father *en grand seigneur* and once having fath-

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omed his vanity, held him secure. Growing older, then, Monsieur de Bergerac became bitter, introspective, and profoundly disappointed. Besides his failure to secure an education he was, being morbidly sensitive, constantly in agony on the subject of his personal appearance, which was strangely altering. He had been a slightly little boy with a somewhat remarkable nose, but as he approached early manhood this nose had grown disproportionately, and when finally he was quit of Grangier and the College of Beauvais it was a thing of open wonder. It was long, high-bridged, and bony, curved like a Moorish sword-blade, something cleft at the extremity, and immensely arrogant. It was, in reality, a superb nose and finely if formidably constructed, but the face which it ennobled was too lean, too narrow, to furnish it suitable foundation. It dominated too completely the dark and handsome eyes, the mobile mouth, the chin, which was of a normal resolution but, in comparison to it, pitifully weak.

This nose was the cancer at the heart of its possessor's joy of life. It came to influence his whole existence, to force upon him a temper and a habit of deportment not his own, to saddle embarrassment upon his conduct when in the company of ladies and temerity when in that of gentlemen. It came to be, in some fashion, the

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governor of Monsieur de Bergerac's career and, in time, was grown historic. Men were killed because of it, and because Grangier one day made note of it he was pilloried forever for so doing in an indecent posture between the covers of a book. Grangier, himself a man of warts and unsightly disfigurements, observed one day to Monsieur de Bergerac that such a nose was to be envied. "Thy nose," he had said, "must signify a portent to thy generation. Remember, a comet flames in the skies when great men are born, and thy nose, though to be sure it does not yet flame, may one day do so to signify the birth of another Cardinal-Duke like Richelieu or perhaps of a great soldier like Monsieur de Rantzau, who drinks, I am credibly informed, five and twenty bottles of Burgundy every evening at his supper."

He went on, laughing, but he would not have laughed had he been able to see into the heart of Monsieur de Bergerac. When Grangier was past, he stood trembling with fury and muttering promises. "Ah, pig and son of a pig, how well will I remember you. How will I flay you, offal, at my time. My God, permit me to torture this brute with genius for thy pleasure, my God." At his time Monsieur de Bergerac was in fact revenged, though with a pen.

But that such a pleasantry should work in him

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so intolerable an anger was indicative of his outlook upon life. No longer a collegian, he persuaded his father that a gentleman's son should know how to handle a sword, and having been instructed by good masters he intended to fight his way through the world, a world that, he was convinced, should not make mock of him with impunity. He sought by every means to overshadow his nose with an accomplished person and enlisted to aid him in this project a cousin honourably known in fashionable salons. Madeleine Robineau was of the Cyrano through her mother, but she had been married to an authentic nobleman, Christophe de Champagne, Baron de Neuville. She was nine years older than Monsieur de Bergerac, lovely, witty, and kind. She was gallant but not in her cousin's behalf, and toward him acted the part of an elder sister versed in the compartments of society. She engaged to teach him to dance, got him fashionably beribboned apparel, discussed with him for hours the various virtues of these ribbons coloured "*espagnole malade*," "*rouge-sang-de-bœuf*," "*merde d'oie*," "*face grattée*," and the rest, and informed him of the mysteriously fascinating shibboleth of the Hôtel Rambouillet, from the blue salon of which the spoken elegancies of the divine Arthénice impressed even His Eminence the Cardinal-Duke.

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Monsieur de Bergerac took passionately to all this and astounded domestics with his precious syllables until he should be adept and as fluent as Mademoiselle de Scudéry, or Arthénice herself, the Marquise de Rambouillet. To a drawer he would say in a voice at once expiring and ineffably sweet, "Prithee, thou urban Ganymede, dispatch here a chalice made heavy with the blood of the grape, the body of God Bacchus." If the grimy urchin goggled at him in amazement, which he did more often than not, it was a genuine trial to Monsieur de Bergerac to be forced to descend to the crass imperative, "Bring wine, little idiot," and he resented having to do so. He strutted in his walk, minced, hands upon hips, like any scented poppet of the Marais, caressed a tiny black moustache, sighed, laughed at nothing to show his teeth, yawned to display the slenderness of his fingers, postured to display a leg, and in everything mimed the perfect courtier as outlined by the sponsors of the Carte du Tendre. And always he peered at people to discover to himself their reactions to his appearance and whether the impression created by his nose remained as startling as ever.

In the year 1639, his twentieth, he was noticeable in several cabarets, notably those of the Croix de Lorraine, the Petit Diable, the Fosse

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aux Lions in the Rue du Pas-de-la-Mule, the Croix Blanche and the Croix-de-Fer in the Rue Saint-Denis, the Mouton Blanc near the cemetery of Sain-Jean-du-Maraais, the Torches, the Trois Cuillers in the Rue aux Ouës, the Galère in the Rue Saint-Thomas-du-Louvre, and the Chêne Verte. Clad in the height of fashion, in a tight doublet of crimson satin the vents of which displayed a *doublure* of yellow taffeta, breeches of velvet, ribboned at the knee, silk stockings, shoes of Russian leather and spurs of gold, he bore across his chest a baldric wrought with symbols in gold thread, over his shoulders a short cloak of embroidered velvet, and on his hands, extending to his elbows, green satin gloves worked with lace. His hat of felt bore a plume to it that bobbed as he strutted, inviting the envy of the passers-by, who took him for the King's latest minion or for some notable young lord. All these magnificences, which had cost a considerable sum, had been provided for him by Madame de Neuville, whose coffers were never empty and who hoped in this way to enable her cousin to achieve his fortune by one of the two acknowledged means of succeeding. Thus accoutred, he might attach himself to the company of some nobleman of influence and so kiss hands at the Louvre, become the lover of a lady of position,

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and in time contract a wealthy alliance. Or he might utilize his finery in catching the eye of a famous captain, secure election to a company of guards or musketeers, acquire a reputation in the wars, and come to the same happy goal, his marriage to an heiress.



Cyrano

SAVINIEN I (of Bergamo) CIRANO.

ABEL I (Seigneur de Mauvières et Bergerac)

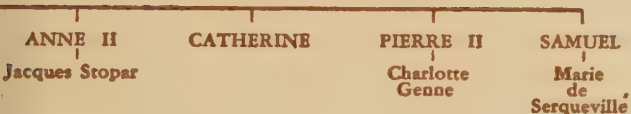
Esperance Bellanger

DENYS ABEL II ANTOINE HONORÉ SAVINIEN MARIE ANNE
de. Marie de. de. (de Cyrano de Jean Ch.
Marcy Bergerac) de Serre Poussemotte

MARIE CATHERINE ABEL-PIERRE



ANNE LE MAIRE



PIERRE II

Marie Doussin

MARIE
ELIZABETH
Jean Choffler

JEROME
1. Simone
Landois
2. Marie
Cherbois

PAUL

MARIE

Chapter ii

MADELEINE DE NEUVIL- LETTE, THE REAL ROXANE

FOR that he should succeed in so doing came to be the dearest wish of Madame de Neuville, who beheld in her cousin the one member of the Cyrano, excepting herself, capable of advancing the fortunes of that family. She devoted much time to the situation of Monsieur de Bergerac, received him familiarly at all hours at her bedside, questioned him daily upon his movements, and displayed an almost maternal anxiety in his progress. Her affection for him was perfectly familiar, since, as ladies in her day were judged, she was honest, respected her husband, and gave her favours never to more than

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one gallant at a time. The suggestion that her personal beauty, which was markable, might enflame her youthful cousin would have seemed to her monstrous, and indeed she was accustomed to embrace him as though he were a child incapable of any passions. Thus, daily, she would examine him as to whether he had been observed before the Louvre or ogled by the occupants of consequent-appearing equipages, and since Monsieur de Bergerac knew what would compose his reward if he answered always in the affirmative, so did he always answer.

Madame would then kiss him, and the young man, inexperienced, and unable to gauge precisely the temper of these caresses, would tremble with emotion and believe himself to be on the threshold of complete happiness. When she would instruct him in the careers of such men as Chabot, who became the lover and then the husband of a great lady of the Rohan uniquely because he was a pretty fellow and apt at dancing, he would listen perfunctorily and gaze in calf-like rapture at objects which had no part in this tutelage. If Madame spoke warmly of the successes of Castelnau, a captain of the King's Guards by virtue only of the friendship of the late marshal and duc, De Luynes, who had perceived him one day fencing with a comrade in the

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Rue du Coq, Monsieur de Bergerac's thoughts would be elsewhere and his manner strangely inattentive. All this Madame de Neuvillette did not at once observe. She became, as time passed, and still the youth remained unattached in any creditable company, a little impatient, but she never dreamed that when absent from her side Monsieur de Bergerac was in no place where he might attract the commendation of princes, and was occupied solely in lustful reveries upon herself.

At last, however, this business was suddenly and a little tragically resolved. Presenting himself at the usual hour one afternoon in April, 1639, Monsieur de Bergerac found his cousin out of humour and inclined to revery. He could not know, and so be warned, that previous to his arrival Madame's chamber woman Jeanneton had committed a gross impertinence. Jeanneton had presumed to advise Madame not to receive her cousin when clothed as though for the reception of a gallant. The woman had observed that when lecturing Monsieur de Bergerac upon the niceties of deportment, Madame de Neuvillette was sometimes accustomed to leap from her bed and pace the floor, veiled only in a laced linen, no more substantial than nothing at all. To this Madame had been abrupt.

CYRANO

"Jeanneton, my girl, you are a fool."

"Yes, madame."

"He is a babe. An infant no more vicious than a chick in a shell."

"Good, madame."

"I might take him into my naked bed and he would receive such an action as a command to go instantly to sleep."

Jeanneton had here vented a low moan.

"You do not agree?"

"Madame, I will say only this. When yesterday Madame was so careless as to allow her linen to become disarrayed while gesticulating, the eyes of Madame's innocent cousin were fastened where they should not have been fastened, and they were burning like the eyes of a wolf."

Madame de Neuville had started violently. She had grown pink, feeling obscurely that Jeanneton had accused her cousin of an incestuous desire. "Jeanneton, you are lying."

"That is very well, madame."

"I am not pleased with you. I will slap you."

And she had indeed slapped Jeanneton and dismissed her, but the woman's words remained in her memory and still festered there when Monsieur de Bergerac stood bowing beside her bed. Nevertheless, she had attempted to banish the matter from her mind and had asked her

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cousin the usual questions touching his fortunes of that day.

"Were you to-day at the Louvre?"

"Yes, madame."

"Whom did you see there?"

"I saw Monsieur de Cavoye and Monsieur le Prince, Monsieur de Saint-Geran and Monsieur de Saint-Luc."

"Did they salute you?"

"Madame, I had not the honour of a salutation from Monsieur le Prince. The others, yes."

Madame de Neuville, remembering that Saint-Luc had advanced more than one young man, forgot Jeanneton's loathsome insinuations. She flung herself impetuously from her bed and embraced her cousin, as though she were a mother embracing a son who had distinguished himself at school.

Monsieur le Bergerac, however, had come to the extremity of his self-control.

To his own astonishment he suddenly found himself with his kinswoman and patroness in his arms, advancing toward the single furniture in the room upon which two might comfortably repose. For a moment he was even unaware that his curls were being almost wrenched from his head and that when he sought to kiss his burden between neck and shoulder, his burden sought

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desperately to bite his left ear. There followed, for Monsieur de Bergerac, a brief period of unconsciousness, and when he had fully recovered his senses it was to find himself standing with the rigidity of the mesmerized, holding in his hands the torn remnants of an alien garment while Madame de Neuvillette sped away from him, bare of clothing as the nascent Anadyomene and to his eyes, had they given judgment, far more beautiful.

He fell upon his knees.

His cousin, abed again, hid herself from his sight beneath the covers.

"Madame, I——"

"Go!"

"I beseech you, madame——"

"Go! Go! Go!"

Instantly Monsieur de Bergerac comprehended what had befallen him. At the last moment, at the very hour of the shepherd, Madame de Neuvillette had succumbed to an hysterical intolerance of his nose. Within him, it was as though his heart, at this realization, had been transformed into a burial amphora filled with ashes. He arose. He recovered his hat, bowed so that his curls drooped upon his right instep, turned upon heel, and departed from the Hôtel de Neuvillette.

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Upon the next day he called in person to deliver a letter of apology and was informed that Madame was indisposed. Madame, however, read the letter and learned that Monsieur de Bergerac had never been to the Louvre, knew no one, and had worn out his fine clothes upon the benches of cabarets. Further, that he cared nothing for advancement and was dying of bitterness and chagrin. And lastly, that since Madame had scorned him he was happy so to die, and that he trespassed this barren life kissing her hands.

Madeleine de Neuville was at first so angry and then so concerned that she became in actuality indisposed for twenty-four hours. After which she shrugged her fine shoulders and waited for Monsieur de Bergerac to attend again upon her. Want, she conceived, would sooner or later return him to her influence, purged of sentimentality and preposterous ideas of gallantry.

Monsieur de Bergerac was, however, more affected by this incident than she supposed. Though he continued to strut upon the Pont-Neuf among the mountebanks, the public wenches, the peddlers, lacqueys, monks of all habits, thieves, and errant gentlemen; though he drank his wine daily in cabarets, challenging mockery, though he gamed and seemed blithe in

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company, he was, in private, more than ever sombre and was grown so melancholic that his health was visibly affected. It was become obvious to him, in his sensitive condition before the world, that his cousin's efforts in his behalf had always been destined to fail; that no Seigneur, unless needful of a jester, would ever attach him in his tail. As for the likelihood of his finding favour in the eyes of a great lady, the idea was monstrous. The dazzling but cruel Madeleine had herself disposed of such a possibility, and in any case Monsieur de Bergerac cared little for such a ladder to eminence. He was candid enough with himself to admit that he did not love his cousin, and he felt no want to love anyone. He had desired Madeleine, he would doubtless desire other women, and in so doing allow himself to be deceived into the belief that he loved, but there would be an end. If he sought a good marriage it was to insure his prosperity, but he was perfectly confident that his nose would constantly destroy such a purchase upon the future. And the thought of this came slowly to terrify him.

For his clothes became daily less and less impressive, his purse more and more lean.

His pride forbade him to return to the Hôtel de Neuville, and rather than do so he would



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have instantly preferred to starve. Nevertheless, he did not relish starvation. His father, with whom he did not stand upon good terms because he chose, being independent-minded, to inhabit lodgings in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier at some distance from the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, made him a negligible allowance which, after the munificence of Madeleine de Neuville, seemed beggarly. And then, a fortnight after his dismissal by his cousin, Monsieur de Mauvières sent him word that he had cut his stipend in half the further to enrich his brother Abel, whose conduct deserved reward.

Upon the receipt of this news Monsieur de Bergerac thought to succumb to a parricidal frenzy. His father's pretensions, his wanton refusal, by removing him from the College of Beauvais, to further what might well have been a brilliant scholastic record, his ignoble manners and questionable conduct, were revived with embellishments in the memory of Monsieur de Bergerac, and he resolved to submit to them no longer. Hitherto he had preserved a certain filial respect for his progenitor, but he would put that by. He determined to wait upon Monsieur de Mauvières and informed that decayed gentleman of his intention.

Chapter iii

CARBON DE CASTELJALOUX

THUS it was that he went one day in late May, 1639, to the Faubourg Saint-Jacques and stood before his father, clad in his soiled finery and a resentment that only thinly sheathed his hatred from the other. That one, by nature timid, cringed and drummed with his fingers upon the table at which, unmindful of his dignity as a gentleman of note, he sat in a shirt of dirty linen, breeches of rusty Flanders cloth, and slovenly slippers unequipped with heels. He talked in a voice with a whine to it and avoided glancing at his son. "My child, in view of your pleasures which, severals inform me, are riotous, I think

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it wise to something shorten your purse. For a time, only, my child, until you check the disorder in your life and strive a little to emulate your brother, who is the pride of his father and his friends."

He mumbled and rubbed the stubble upon his chin, gazing with resentment at the spurs that graced with no congruity the heels of his youngest son.

"They are of gold," he observed accusingly and fell to estimating their probable value in his mind.

Monsieur de Bergerac said in disgust, "Certainly they are of gold, monsieur, and I beg you will cease to consider them with such avidity. They walked into this room upon my heels, and upon my heels they shall walk out again, clinking joyfully to be departing. I venture to bring to your attention, monsieur, in this matter of my portion, that whoever has told you that my pleasures are riotous, lies like a false mistress. If you shorten my purse, furthermore, you will do more than shorten it, you will destroy it entirely. As for the estimable conduct of Monsieur my brother, I am gratified to hear of it and I shall reserve for his ear alone a word or two touching his acquisition of what belongs to me. I beg you will have the courtesy to listen to me, monsieur."

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His father, with palpable malice, had pretended to fall asleep. He now looked up and blinked his red-rimmed eyes like an old turtle. He repeated, "Only for a time, my child, until you perceive the error of your ways——"

Monsieur de Bergerac, in a transport of annoyance, stamped with both his feet.

"Blood of God!" he howled. "You rob me of my sustenance and sanctify your villainy with hypocritical pretenses at paternal concern. Bah, monsieur, I am not of an age to be cozened. I go to the wars and I spit upon this threshold as I go. When I return a marshal do not dog me for favours. I bid you farewell."

He turned and left the room, and as he went did, in fact, spit upon the threshold.

Monsieur de Mauvières shrugged his shoulders and for a time continued to speculate upon the value of the gold spurs. Then he went honestly to sleep.

There was, however, no such repose for his youngest son. Monsieur de Bergerac, having thus candidly made an end to his relations with the head of his house, saw himself put to it to live at all. He regretted his unseasonable fury in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques and reflected that after all half his portion was something. Now he was forced to quit Paris and to seek his fortune with

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the armies, and for a young man unattached to a company of guards or musketeers the occasions for preferment were scarce. Quitting his father's house he went directly to a small merchant in the Rue de la Ferronnerie and sold his spurs. He had never possessed a horse upon which to practise them, and they were, as he had boasted, of gold. Then, armed with the resulting pistoles, he strode back to his lodgings and buckled on his rapier. He strutted no more, nor remembered to go gaited after the manner of the Hôtel Rambouillet. His condition no longer permitted such levities.

Once armed, his appearance was suddenly completely consonant with his name. He looked more a Gascon than Gassion, the lion of the French forces, and the length of his rapier was so great that when he walked, it dragged behind him with an effect similar to that caused by the tail of a prehistoric lizard. This rapier was the object of Monsieur de Bergerac's constant solicitude, and he had composed rondeaux in its honor, as Roland had addressed assonanced tirades to Durandal, his sword. He was, he was confident, skilled in its usage, though in 1639 he could reproach himself with having not yet employed it to defend his honour. Madame de Neuville's gift had been to blame for this. The quality of

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his apparel had, effectively, seemed to distract attention from his nose, but now that this apparel was in the sere, Monsieur de Bergerac beheld, ahead of him, a future compact with violence. He left his lodgings and, by way of the Pont-Neuf and the Place Dauphine, came in time to the Croix de Fer in the Rue Saint-Denis, where he was engaged to drink wine with his most intimate friend, his old schoolfellow, Henri Le Bret.

This Le Bret was a bourgeois, sober minded, pompous, loyal, cautious, and remarkably irritating. He was filled with maxims of good conduct, restrained disapproval of his friend's vehemence, and a priggish sense of self-importance the more astonishing because at the age of twenty he was of no importance whatever. He rashly esteemed himself a swordsman though he had never fought, handsome though vanity rendered him often ridiculous, and vastly superior to Monsieur de Bergerac because his father was well-to-do and kept his son in funds. Nevertheless, he was pleasant because, at the bottom, he was a youth of a genuinely affectionate nature, and when his affection was aroused it remained as constant as the progression of the seasons. Therefore Monsieur de Bergerac, who had few friends, was fond of him and relied upon him for assistance when

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his own ineptitude in the handling of his affairs caused him to seek advice.

At the Croix de Fer he found Le Bret seated and his attention directed upon his hands, which he admired though they were none the less undistinguished. He greeted Monsieur de Bergerac briefly and, when the wine was brought, took it in the proportion of one tenth of Burgundy to nine of water. Then he said with an air exquisitely pontifical, "I have a friend."

"Myself," submitted his companion hopefully.

Le Bret frowned. "A friend or rather an acquaintance who is in the company of Monsieur de Carbon de Casteljaloux."

Monsieur de Bergerac was impressed. Monsieur de Carbon commanded an independent company, composed chiefly of Gascons, which was famous for many exploits and was no less reputable than those commanded once by Vitry, he who became a marshal for pistolling Concini, Miossens, the Cadet of Pons, who later attained a like eminence for arresting the great Condé and Monsieur de Saint-Preuil, who had not yet been so fortunate as to receive the bâton since under the Cardinal-Duke there were no opportunities to assassinate or arrest dangerous men.

"Monsieur de Carbon," continued Le Bret, "has need of men. He accepts only Gascons and

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gentlemen, save it be in extreme cases. Therefore, recognizing as I do that you are, on account of your name, frequently mistaken for a gentleman of the Périgord, and knowing that you desire to quit Paris for a time, I have undertaken that my friend, Monsieur de Castel-Sarrasin, shall make us known to his captain and on the strength of your name and my appearance——”

His friend muttered.

“—our appearance then—prefer our nominations to his company.”

“Proceed.”

“Do not be importunate. Monsieur de Castel-Sarrasin will be here shortly to take us before Monsieur de Carbon, who dines at a half after six in the Hôtel des Essarts.”

“Good! Henri, your abilities amaze me.”

“My abilities are well known to not a few. Let us rise. This is Monsieur de Castel-Sarrasin.”

The guardsman came in to them as lightly as a balloon. His brown face was a little flushed, his lips beneath his fine moustache were moist, and his eyes were gay. His broad swordsman's chest heaved beneath his baldric as he threw back his head and holloed like a hunting horn for the tap boy, and the pommel of his rapier beneath his sunburned hand was suddenly depressed so that behind him, the blade leaped arrogantly up as

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though to emphasize his demand. He was as sappy as a tree in springtime, full of strength, good nature, and good wine. To Le Bret's salute he lifted a hand and swept it away from the curling brim of his plumed felt hat.

"Ah, my child, prompt upon the ground," he said, and at the name De Bergerac greeted that gentleman in his own tongue, thinking him *bon guasconet*. Being a little drunken he ignored Monsieur de Bergerac's reply, which demonstrated his entire inability to say "*higue, hogue, hagasset*," and seized the tap boy, who had brought in his tippie, in a grip of iron.

"Monkey, attain excellence by being prompt!" he pleaded, then bounced the boy from him as he might a ball. The drink he had taken caused his tongue to rove the deeper into his patois and the "eu" sound became more explosively "ou" with every word he spoke. He swallowed heeltaps the measure served him, and then, taking each by an elbow, he ushered his recruits into the Rue Saint-Denis. Until now he had examined neither, but suddenly the hyper-aquilinity of Monsieur de Bergerac's profile smote him to admiration.

"*Mordioux!*" he stuttered, and peered like a man entranced.

Monsieur de Bergerac shivered as though with the ague, and he ground his teeth.

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Le Bret, fearful lest their venture should at this juncture come to grief, fell to whispering in the ear of Monsieur de Castel-Sarrasin. "My friend," he explained, "is a Gascon like yourself and sensitive. I beg you will not find it diverting to speculate upon his nose."

"Nose?" screamed the guardsman in genuine amazement. "Nose? Your words are inadequate, my child. They are pitifully insufficient. Say rather a flying buttress, a siege-work salient, a——" Comparisons seemed to fail him and he rocked upon his heels. Then he continued generously, "Ah, we Gascons. Sensitive as virgins, brave as lions, lusty as stallions."

He hailed a carriage and remained entirely unaware of the strange state of mesmerism into which his fury had cast Monsieur de Bergerac. All three mounted, and after addressing the coachman, Monsieur de Castel-Sarrasin went suddenly to sleep against the shoulder of the man whom he had insulted and, doing so, had even the temerity to snore a little. Monsieur de Bergerac, his face a pale mask of ferocity, stared straight ahead, and Le Bret, his smug self-sufficiency gone from him, perspired with nervousness.

At the Hôtel des Essarts his injurious syllables had by his nap apparently been erased from the

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memory of the guardsman. He dismounted, leaving Le Bret to pay, and became on the instant all business. He hurried the young men into an entresol, then through an antechamber filled with gambling comrades, into the private closet of Monsieur des Essarts. Here he took leave of them and skipped away. He was again thirsty. In the closet, with the voices of the gamblers on one side of them, on the other, through the closed door to the dining salon, the conversation of the captains at meat, the friends stared at each other. Le Bret's feeling of superiority over his friend was no more. In this alien atmosphere of violence only dormant for the time being, he was timid and without confidence. Monsieur de Bergerac, however, was transfigured by his rage and was become impressive.

"I will spit him like a capon," he hissed, and fell to biting his nails.

"He was drunk," said Le Bret feebly.

"Drunk or sober I will cancel him. I will play Fulbert to his Abélard and turn him loose to chatter no more of stallions and flying buttresses. Wait, that is all, wait."

In truth, he seemed mortally offended.

In the dining room of the captains there was the sound of chairs being pushed back from a table. A door was opened, and in it, at his ease

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after full feeding, stood Monsieur de Carbon de Casteljaloux. He was a short man but built massively, and the size of his enormous belly was still not incommensurate with the width of his heavy shoulders. His face was brown as a sweat-stained saddle, and his hair was white. He wore chamois and rusty breeches, and his jackboots had been replaced by heelless slippers. His wide sword belt was slack about his hips, and he looked therefore as though he were unstayed. He belched a little and, after the free custom of the day, dislodged with a finger a morsel of meat from his teeth. Le Bret he glanced at but casually. Monsieur de Bergerac, however, caught and held his attention at once and seemed to fascinate him. He straddled a chair and examined him as though bewitched and did not miss the length of his rapier. "So," he said finally, "you wish to bear arms?"

Monsieur de Bergerac bowed.

"Your name?"

"Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac."

Monsieur de Casteljaloux slapped his thighs. His face became illuminated with joy. He reached forward perilously upon the chair he bestrode and thrust a finger into the lean midriff of the boy before him. "Body of God!" he chor-tled, "I promised myself that only my country-

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men have the audacity to beget sons equipped with such noses. My child, you have the nose of a hero, hence, a Gascon's nose——”

Monsieur de Bergerac was uncomfortable. He flushed and murmured that, all the same, he was not a Gascon but a Parisian, but he made no headway against the loud expression of the captain's thoughts.

“—a nose, in fact, which will carry you far. With such a nose and such a rapier, you will, my child, follow in my footsteps and become, who knows, a second Casteljaloux or even a second Gassion.”

He got to his feet and embraced Cyrano de Bergerac, who stood like a rod in furious embarrassment.

“So, Monsieur de Bergerac, I myself will furnish your accoutrements. From this day forward you are of my company and, since we ride within a week, hold yourself ready. Go, embrace your comrades.” He pushed his recruit toward the door of the antechamber and the recruit moved as though he were a man of wood. He foresaw an immediate fulfilment of a destiny of brawls, and his anger against Monsieur de Castel-Sarasin being for a moment forgotten, he was prey to a natural nervousness. Nevertheless, he entered the antechamber, and after him the door was

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closed. Casteljaloux turned to the bemused Le Bret and cried, "A nose that astounds and gratifies me. With such a nose anything is possible." He hummed in his roughened soldier's voice:

*"Je suis donc né pour les batailles
Landeriri!"*

and twisted a moustache that, in strange contradiction to his hair, was black as jet. Then, for the first time, he seemed to see Le Bret. He inspected him without satisfaction and said, "You are his friend?"

Le Bret admitted diffidently that this was true.

"Then," continued Casteljaloux brusquely, "I accept you, though be pleased to observe, monsieur, that it is not often that I do a Parisian bourgeois the honour of accepting his nomination to my company."

He turned his back and fell to paring his nails with a tiny poignard which he plucked from his distorted doublet. Correctly assuming that his audience was at an end, Le Bret left him.

He found Monsieur de Bergerac in the entre-sol pondering anew on the insolence of their guide. Quitting the Hôtel des Essarts, the friends walked upon the Pont-Neuf, and Le Bret, to his chagrin, found that he was grown obsequious to

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the cadet of Cyrano. "Savinien," he said to him, "you will succeed. Monsieur de Carbon seems to love you like a son. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that you will become a marshal. How I envy you!"

Monsieur de Bergerac, at first amazed at this unwonted attitude on the part of one who was accustomed to patronize him, promptly thought it best to take it as his due.

"And if I do," he replied, "and I agree that it is far from being impossible, indeed I think it probable, that one day I shall receive the bâton, do you think that De Bergerac will forget his friends? No, no, my child." He had imitated for an instant the gracious condescension of Monsieur de Castel-Sarrasin and instantly recalled his grievance. "Nor does he forget his enemies. We will meet, that windy fool and I. Listen, Henri, here is an impromptu which occurred to me just now as you spoke."

He adopted an attitude, one hand upon the pommel of his rapier, the other upon his chest, elbow delicately raised.

"*Le brave Cyrano,*" he sang suddenly in a thin tenor,

*"S'en va aux combats,
Aider les maréchaux
Commander nos soldats.*

CYRANO

*Don, don, larira dondaine,
Don, don, larira dondon.' "*

He looked hopefully at Le Bret and said, "There is more." His friend, jostling a peddler of hunting falcons whose hooded little charges shrieked at him blasphemously all together, replied gloomily, "I do not doubt it, but it will keep."

The clock upon the Samaritaine marked seven, and they continued upon their way to dine.



Chapter iv

AMONG THE CAPTAINS

PARIS with its narrow streets in which the sun, prohibited by the outward bulge of ancient houses, the crazy inclinations of interwoven roofs, never or seldom came, stank with a mighty stench. The city's mud, that notorious mud upon which astounded aliens composed epigrams and proverbs, was somewhat less in evidence in May, but the exhalations of its formidable putrescence were always potent and in the sensitive nose of Monsieur de Bergerac peculiarly abominable. Le Bret was the less affected. He was Parisian to the bone and, like Madame de Temines, he was homesick beyond the malodorous periphery of

his native city. The appalling filth of such streets as the "Tire-Boudin," the "Trousse-Vache," the "Trop-va-qui-Dure," and the "Chat-qui-Pêche" was not horrible to the senses of Le Bret, and the miasmatic conduits of the city's sewerage which served as thoroughfares from the Grand-Châtelet to the Seine comforted rather than outraged his stomach.

Monsieur de Bergerac, however, remembered country air and never became accustomed to that of town. He paused in the Rue Saint-Martin and purchased a small bottle of perfume and held it to his nose as he proceeded. Le Bret allowed himself, with misgivings, since he now followed where his friend led, a sneer. "If I may be permitted to say so," he observed, "such a trick will but direct attention to your nose." Monsieur de Bergerac, to his surprise, but smiled. He felt that allusions, once unforgivable even to Le Bret, might now be taken lightly from an old friend. Since yesterday, when a military future had been unrolled before his eyes, he was become a man, strong, tolerant, confident, and just. That morning had been delivered to his lodgings sufficient money to furnish himself not only with the uniform of Monsieur de Carbon's guards, but with a mount, and he wore the first well, though deploring somewhat the newness of its appearance.

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In it he felt himself to be clothed not only in material dignity but in a spiritual habit no longer permissible of melancholy or introspective bile. He was, in fact, a new man. He no longer strutted or minced, or paced like a hungry wolf. He swaggered, and his swagger was admirable. His horse he had not yet attempted to bestride.

"My poor friend," he said to Le Bret, "be reminded that I have but little time to squander on such preoccupations. I no longer think of my nose. It is, as Monsieur de Carbon was pleased to observe, the nose of a hero. That suffices. But that I have an errand to perform touching my comrade, Monsieur de Castel-Sarrasin (a good name in Gascony), I am at ease concerning it. Make haste, *mon petit*, I have rendezvous at the Hôtel des Essarts."

Le Bret mended his pace, saying nothing. He felt diminutive. They came to the Place Dauphine and paused to admire its triangular symmetry, its white and red houses, its ordered and unbroken roofs. "Here the air is fresher," said Monsieur de Bergerac, and threw away his little flask. On the Pont-Neuf they heard behind them the tumult of a cavalcade, the indignant squeals of trampled wenches, the bitter blasphemies of peddlers and pickpockets jostled from the clearway. Noting the number of mounted men, Le

Bret said, "A great Seigneur. Monsieur de Bouillon-Sedan, perhaps."

Monsieur de Bergerac became radiant. "Great, certainly. Behold, it is Monsieur de Carbon."

That captain was indeed returning from audience at the Louvre, and since, as always, his minutes in the Presence had been acid, he was choleric. He sat a big roan and pushed it, so that his fifty gentlemen, a tail the magnitude of which he owed to his reputation and his favour with the marshals, galloped to keep pace irrespective of pedestrians.

Monsieur de Bergerac uncovered, and the angry little eye of the old Gascon noted him at once. "We dine," he bellowed, and turned to a lieutenant, "take him up, Monsieur de Morcenx," he directed, and rode on.

Monsieur de Bergerac avoided hooves and by the stirrup climbed to the haunches of a restive Flanders gelding. He clung to Monsieur de Morcenx and was disquieted. Le Bret he forgot, and that young man looked after him in chagrin until the importunings of a girl *à quinze sous* forced him to follow.

In the closet of Monsieur des Essarts, Casteljaloux, unmindful of caution, unbosomed himself of his humours—humours, he pointed out, forced upon him by his reception at court. Des Essarts,

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who was sympathetic, ate Angers plums and groaned. De Bergerac stood rapt, immersed in satisfaction at thus being in the company of two known captains.

The closet of Monsieur des Essarts looked out through lozenged windows upon the Rue de Tournon, and in that thoroughfare Monsieur de Bergerac might witness the eternal parade of swordsmen, most of whom, it was pleasing to reflect, had never dined with such as were his hosts. Monsieur des Essarts, with Guitaut, Tilladet, Catelnau, and La Salle, commanded those companies which, with Tréville's Musketeers, composed the King's Guards, and he was a considerable man. He was clear for the King, and like his fellow captains constantly refused Richelieu's offers of advancement if he would put off the King's coat for the Cardinal's. He was of the South, the sandy marshes between Arjuzanx and Sabres, and therefore in some sort a neighbour to Carbon de Casteljaloux. He was still young, junior by twenty years to his friend, but he was grizzled, and a sword had once ripped his cheek from eye to chin so that when he smiled his lean dark face appeared devilish. He had good shoulders, a flat belly, and straight legs, and many women loved him. He had married a sister to Monsieur de Tréville, and the brothers-in-law

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were close friends, De Tréville invariably selecting his musketeers from the guards of Des Essarts.

While Monsieur de Carbon declaimed his grievances he motioned to Monsieur de Bergerac to be seated, but the young man remained standing, nevertheless. The chairs were encumbered with saddles, jackboots, cantle bags, and fifty hoods, jesses, and lures, since Monsier des Essarts, like Louis XIII, was killed in venery. Lying negligently over one chair was a woman's house gown of sprigged muslin at which Monsieur de Bergerac glanced once but not again.

Monsieur de Carbon, in the meantime, roared on like a lion. He appeared to be in a transport, and his hair seemed to grow whiter, his great face redder, and his moustache blacker with every oath to which he lent his tongue. He said outrageous things about his king, repeated gossip thirty years old, asserted that Louis was Concini's bastard and that Henry IV of glorious memory could never have begotten such a creature. He swore that Luynes had debauched the boy, that Bouquiquant (so he pronounced Buckingham) had rendered the same service to Anne of Austria, his queen, then suddenly pressed his hands to his temples and fell thunderously across the table.

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Monsieur des Essarts was at his side in an instant.

"Dear friend, you exceed," he said, loosened Monsieur de Carbon's doublet, and fell to fanning him with his wide-brimmed felt hat.

Monsieur de Bergerac was immensely concerned. He made aimless gestures of assistance and small noises of sympathy, but Monsieur des Essarts was reassuring.

"It is nothing. Monsieur is no longer young, he has spent his life fighting for two kings, and this one treats him as though he trailed a pike for Spain."

Monsieur de Carbon returned suddenly and loudly to consciousness.

"Does he treat Tréville thus or Trémoille? I flatter myself that he does not. No, no, it is always I. 'Ah, *peste*, another Gascon,' he says, after I have been for five minutes with my nose flattened against my jackboot in a salutation as supple as though I were eighteen instead of eight-and-sixty. Up to that time he giggles with Monsieur le Grand as though the two were convent girls. Bah, this Cinq-Mars! A shame to a valiant father, even though D'Effiat lost four battles to win his bâton. Observe, also, that the boy runs every night to carouse with Marion de l'Orme and mocks at the King's affection. When Louis is

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peevish at this neglect it is captains like myself who bear the brunt. *Sandioux!* I, who have crossed swords with Piccolomini, who captured—may the day be cursed that I ever did so—Monsieur le duc de Montmorency, who have out-fought Monsieur de Rohan, must I truckle to a sodomite who cannot govern save from the lap of a priest?" The old gentleman swore again, and so terribly that Des Essarts perspired.

"Not so loud, my friend. You surpass Monsieur de Roquelaure, who, I am told, lately cursed the good God in the very maw of a thunderstorm. After all, you are not the only one. It is known that he has mortally offended my brother-in-law, Tréville, by showing him his back for an hour the while he played with his tracies. As for myself, since the days when it diverted him to shave us all in person and so invent this minion's badge called the royale, he spits upon me. And why? Because I observed harmlessly to Monsieur de Créqui that with so many qualities of a valet, it must be difficult to be a king."

Casteljaloux shouted. His anger was dissipated, and he clapped his haunches. His seizure was past.

"Harmlessly! My friend, had you said that to his father, he would have made you a marshal.

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There's the worst of Louis. He is neither one thing nor the other. He should have left you to rot in the Fosse, a dungeon into which one is lowered by a cord, or given you a government. But let us dine."

Monsieur de Bergerac bowed. Casteljaloux waved his hand to him. "You are my guest to-day."

The three proceeded to the dining salon where the older men ate prodigiously, chiefly with their fingers, since they had been instructed in their manners before the days when His Eminence the Cardinal-Duke instituted regular service for the table. De Bergerac ate little and, when Casteljaloux fell to picking his teeth with his minute poignard, withdrew. He had in mind his errand with Monsieur de Castel-Sarrasin. He saw that gentleman in the antechamber at play with friends, and his emotion at this sight was complex but violent. He was far from hating Monsieur de Castel-Sarrasin, and indeed he now considered him with something very near to affection. He had, after all, said nothing which might be construed in the light of premeditated malice, and for the past twenty-four hours Monsieur de Bergerac had succeeded in somewhat sheathing away from such careless expression the sensitive matter of his nature. Nevertheless, pride com-

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pelled him to resentment, and by a little diligent self-hypnosis this resentment might seem to appear justified. And besides this there existed a very excellent chance that Monsieur de Castel-Sarrasin might kill him at his first pass. Monsieur de Bergerac desired to live, but he could not permit himself to think that he was, at the same time, afraid to die. He must prove to himself, and conclusively, by fighting an experienced swordsman, that, life or death, it was all one to him. The need to do so suddenly increased upon him, so that he felt that, as he crossed the ante-chamber, his legs were trembling with excitement.

Le Bret was also there, alone and pensive in a corner. De Bergerac beckoned to him, and the two passed into the entresol.

"You will serve me, Henri?"

"Of course, Savinien," but Le Bret was without enthusiasm. He was a little cheered, however, to perceive that his friend was far from being perfectly composed. Now that the moment of challenge was at hand the cadet of Cyrano reflected that this was to be his first duel and might very well be his last. Obviously Castel-Sarrasin was no novice, and no doubt he had been upon the ground more times than he himself had years in his age. Still, the thing was necessary. One

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could not, he assured himself for the fiftieth time, tolerate insults and remain a man of standing in such a fellowship as was captained by Casteljaloux. Castel-Sarrasin was slow in finishing his game, and the entresol was warm. Le Bret, openly fearful, watched his friend mop his brow and said hopefully:

"You are nervous, Savinien?"

"I do not think so. But I have a feeling, an emptiness, as it were, in the pit of the stomach. I should have eaten more, but knowing that a thrust in a full belly is fatal I denied myself. *Peste!* but our man plays like Saint-Luc. He will never come."

Le Bret seemed to collapse. "And I," he moaned, "I ate like a man starved. So this is your friendship. You allow me to gorge like fifty Swiss then call me to serve you. Good, I am instructed."

"Forgive me."

"It is even now not too late. Savinien, postpone this matter."

"Henri, I do not dare. I must have it ended. Listen! Now he comes."

Castel-Sarrasin, arm in arm with Monsieur de Morcenx, did in fact rocket at this moment into sight, jocund and, customarily, a little drunken. When close to the waiting friends he started violently. He saw, glaring at him from the shad-

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ows, two eyes apparently disembodied and without corporeal anchorage. For an instant he feared lest the wine that he had taken had wrought a grave disorder in his brain, but Monsieur de Bergerac immediately materialized. Relieved, the Gascon was about to congratulate the young man on his success with Monsieur de Carbon when he was trenchantly interrupted.

"You have a friend?"

"*Dame*," replied Castel-Sarrasin, astonished, "I still have one or two."

"So have I. Let us walk together, monsieur. You will observe that I say nothing about your nose, which, by the way, I consider ignoble, but your tongue is too long and wants shortening. I charge myself with cutting it."

The Gascon recoiled like a panther. His face, red-brown and clear blooded, became all muddied with fury.

"A puppy!" he said, and blasphemed in the patois of Guyenne. His friend, however, was suave. He said, "It is arranged," and as Le Bret stared like a fish, "but let us go, messieurs." Smoothly he guided the party into the street and observed to Le Bret, "The Pré-aux-Clercs. We take carriage. Do you the same."

He disappeared with Castel-Sarrasin, and the

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challenger and his second hailed another vehicle. Both were silent until the ground was reached and the carriage abandoned. Walking over the grass, which was new and green, Le Bret then said bitterly, "To lose all this for thy nose! It is too much." Numbly Monsieur de Bergerac took note of a multitude of birds, a blue sky, and the melodies of early summer, and silently agreed. But they must go on. Quite palpably Castel-Sarrasin was seriously vexed.

In a little hollow, safe from the view of strolling students or the officiousness of the Benedictines of Saint-Germain, whose abbey dominated the vicinity, Castel-Sarrasin was standing, already prepared, snapping his blade a little in its sheath. He saw Monsieur de Bergerac and drew, ran a thumb down the grooved length of the steel, then said, "Ha! Ha!" and whipped it in the air. The cadet of Cyrano imitated him sedulously, then both came to the parade, stamped with their right heels, and engaged. Castel-Sarrasin said icily, "Be so good, monsieur, as to die like a gentleman and a Gascon, and do not call on saints who will not succour you. I do not as a rule like to kill my countrymen, but, after all, the Périgord can do without you. *Ça! Ça!*" and he lunged *en quarte*.

Monsieur de Bergerac saved his breath. He did

not wish to die at all, and it was far from being because of the Périgord.

He parried coolly and with an imperative wrist forced up his opponent's blade so that hilt was laid to hilt, and his eyes stared into those of Monsieur de Castel-Sarrasin from a distance of no more than a few inches. The eyes of Monsieur de Castel-Sarrasin were large and black and as of velvet, but their pupils seemed fiery and mobile. Monsieur de Bergerac was a little horrified by the intensity of their inspection. He disengaged swiftly, leaped back, crouched and thrust *en septime*, so that the Gascon flicked his blade downward and to the left, bowing a little, as though to a friend.

The sun was warm and, beneath his curls, Monsieur de Bergerac felt the sweat trickle between his shoulder blades. Once his ankle turned and he fell sideways, propping himself for an instant with the palm of his left hand, while the blade of the Guyenne cadet whispered wickedly by his throat. Had he been furnished with a poignard as had been armed a previous generation, he could have eviscerated his man upon the spot.

He perceived to his pleasure that he had indeed been well taught and that his wrist was strong. He broke ground, congratulating himself on the

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length of his rapier, which seemed to baffle Castel-Sarrasin's most extended thrusts, and he permitted himself a smile as for the twentieth time that gentleman's steel sang gratingly but harmlessly upon his own.

"You smile, packet of insolence?" gasped the authentic Gascon, and of a sudden overlunged frantically, flicking an inch of cloth from the shoulder of his opponent's sword arm.

Monsieur de Bergerac sprang back. Riposting, his point had sunk to an inch of its length into his man's tensed pectoral. Castel-Sarrasin, shifting his rapier, was too slow. He dropped his chin upon the steel that tickled his throat and declared that he surrendered himself though his heart was gnawed with chagrin. Then he sat down upon the warm grass. The sun, and the wine of which he had drunken at noon, wrought a dizziness in his head and a nausea in his bowels.

Monsieur de Bergerac, stuttering with pleasure, sought to bind his wound for him, and when he rose, returned to him his sword. Castel-Sarrasin bowed. "It is no disgrace to be set down by a Gascon," he averred. "And our friends?"

Le Bret, they found, had been almost instantly disarmed. His opponent, a man of mercy, had parried one trembling thrust, then spun the

young man's rapier out of his hand and ten feet into the air. Le Bret was almost fainting with relief. "A happy meeting," observed De Morcenx. "Gentlemen, your servant." He helped his friend away and Monsieur de Bergerac and Le Bret gazed at each other with eyes grown young again and blithe.

"Congratulate me."

"Savinien, I will no longer hide from you the volume of my admiration. Without doubt you are a second Bouteville."

Arm in arm they made their way down the Rue de l'Université. The manhood of Monsieur de Bergerac was now countersigned, and an inch of his rapier's point was still discoloured with the ink thereof. He could have been no happier had he won ten thousand pistoles or cuckolded the sombre and impressive Ruvigny with Mademoiselle de Rohan. From his earliest days the cadet of Cyrano had dreamed of duels and duelling. He had, at ten, been beaten for admiring Bouteville, and no detail or description of single combat à *outrance* for the past century was unknown to him. He knew that in 1545 the Council of Trent had condemned his enthusiasm as detestable and contrary to the will of the Church, and that in the following reign Henry II had flouted this edict by witnessing, with his court, the duel

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of Gui Chabot, Seigneur de Jarnac, with the ancestor of the Marquise de Rambouillet, Francis de Vivonne, Seigneur de Chasteigneraye. These gentlemen, fallen out, after an intimate friendship of many years' standing, over a fancied insult to a lady connected with the Chabot, fought in lists and, while his lacqueys prepared his feast of victory, Vivonne was wounded and died before the Royal eye, of a thrust above the knee. This thrust, known as Jarnac's thrust, was a hamstringing iniquity not taught in schools, but at fifteen Monsieur de Bergerac had practised it with a wand.

Under Francis II and Charles IX the ruling of the Council of Trent was made public mock of a dozen times daily in every town in France. In Paris and Blois men like La Mole and Coconnas fought as if they had been professionals, twice or three times daily, *à outrance* with sword and poignard, and, if they survived for a year, had for their pains noble mistresses and lined purses. Pienne de Maignelay and Livarot fought on the Loire River sand near Blois and, by the outcome of their meeting, occasioned sonnets and the prose of Brantôme. Maignelay killed Livarot with a thrust invented by himself, for the play was still developing at the hands of practitioners, and had but time to cry, "Ah, God! What's here?"

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when his victim's lacquey spitted him from behind.

*“Lyvarrot, le premier, en mille et mille lieux
Chargé d'un beau laurier, s'est su victorieux,
Remportant de son los un trophée honorable.*

*“Pienne, s'estant veu vanqueur de ce guerrier,
De ce brave combat remportant le laurier
A reçu d'un laquais une mort misérable.”*

were lines memorized with their octette by Monsier de Bergerac when he had been supposed at his labours upon the classics. In his father's house he had seen cheaply engraved likenesses of Maugiron, Schomberg, Quelus, Livarot, kin to him killed at Blois, Riberac, and Antraguët, the notorious minions of Henry III, whose mêlée had, forty years before his birth, been the wonder of Paris. These boys, all under five-and-twenty, arrogantly handsome with their smooth, cropped black heads, their pearl earrings and wide ruffs, had been close friends, but, such was the power of fashion, when Quelus argued with Antraguët a trivial point involved in the game of cup and ball, they resolved to call one another out, and for no reason save that of sport Maugiron and Livarot engaged to serve Quelus, Schomberg and Riberac, Antraguët. They fought, the

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six of them, at three in the morning in April, 1578, on the rampart of the Porte Saint-Antoine, and when they set to with sword and poignard it was barely dawn. There was no hate involved, no rancour, no revenge. For fun Riberic killed Maugiron and died himself next day of forty wounds. Livarot ran Schomberg, whom he was accustomed to esteem as a brother, through three times, and he died, and Livarot lived for a year, until Bussy slew him. Antraguët, alone, escaped unscathed, after disabling Quelus, whose debts he paid as his own, such was his affection for him, and poignarding him to death as he lay upon the ground because pride kept Quelus from surrendering.

Such was *combat à outrance* and the tyranny of its rules. Louis de Bussy, Joyeuse, De Mouy, and Saint-Megrin were others who killed or were killed as one might win or lose at play, and Henry III, far from preventing them or punishing Antraguët for the loss of his friends, fell on the young fool's neck and sobbed that now Antraguët must love him with the love of the slaughtered four.

Monsieur de Mauvières had seen with his own eyes a duel of the previous reign and told his son of it with a vicarious pride in the bravery of authentic noblemen. Henry IV had rigidly forbid-

den swordplay, but the Prince de Joinville—son to the ancient patron of the Cyrano, murdered at Blois, Henry the Slashed, of Guise—fought four times in a morning with four private gentlemen who had seemed, only seemed, to stare a little closely at a ribbon worn by Joinville in his doublet. Joinville, afterward Duc de Chevreuse and a redoubtable swordsman, wounded all four, calling his thrusts as he fenced as a player at billiards might designate his strokes. Then he had embraced his opponents and, perceiving Monsieur de Mauvières gaping at a distance, bidden him call up his people, though this part of his story his father did not tell Monsieur de Bergerac.

As for Bouteville, his achievements were in the texture of De Bergerac's own memory. Louis de Montmorency, Sovereign Comte de Lusse, Baron de Bouteville and Governor of Senlis, whose years at his death numbered but twenty-seven, duelled, as did the minions, for the sport of it, and killed politely, sad that the game must be finished with. He was born too late, for the Cardinal-Duke had banned all single combats in the year of his début, and Richelieu was an opponent there was none to oppose. Still, Bouteville did his best in a short time, and his fame was as notable as was Bussy's. In a taproom, bored with play and having no mind for wine, he fought

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with meat knives with the Comte de Pontgibaut, and while the sand was still upon the signature of His Eminence's edict against such pastimes made a public spectacle of it. He rode to Flanders with Pontgibaut and laughed for days to hear that the Cardinal-Duke had hanged them both in effigy in the Place de Grève. He held the post of gentleman-in-waiting to an archduchess in the Netherlands who was aunt to Louis XIII, but he wearied of inaction and returned into France, where, with all the pleasure in the world, he fought with Torigny at the beginning of Holy Week, 1626. Loth to shorten his diversion, he fenced for an hour before killing and then sought further amusement. A Comte de la Frette obliged him in January, 1627, at Saint-Germain-en-Laye and him too, when he was grown bored, Bouteville killed. Then he returned to Flanders and laughed again when told that Richelieu had built a scaffold expressly for him. Pardoned after a time, he was informed that he might return to his government, but that nearer Paris than Senlis he might not come. Construing this as due to the malice of His Eminence he made it publicly known that he would within the month fight *à outrance* in the Place Royale so that Richelieu might, from his windows, observe every thrust and parry of his performance. Boisrobert, the Cardinal-Duke's

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jester, repeating this to his master, received, in his breeches, a kick that he was afterward wont to describe as the benison of the toe and so proof conclusive that Richelieu was a Manichee.

Within the month, as he had promised, Bouteville had found his man and engaged his seconds. Beuvron, friend to the late De la Frette, was forced to challenge and secured the services of the Marquis de Bussy d'Amboise. La Berthe, equerry to Bouteville, and Bucquet, who held the same post for Beuvron, examined each other's principals for greave or cuirass on the morning appointed, then all took carriage to the Place Royale. There, under the minister's windows, they engaged. Bouteville and Beuvron disarmed each other of rapiers and so came to daggers, but their wrists were matched. Neither could turn the other's blade, so that Bouteville said, "Let us put up. Our fight is *gaillard*." Sheathing, they found that Des Chapelles, Bouteville's second, had split Bussy's lung, and that Bucquet had run La Berthe through the throat. And also, the word was out against them. Beuvron and Bucquet escaped to England. But Bouteville and Des Chapelles, loitering to dine and to console with La Berthe, rode too late and further erred by pausing to ask Beuvron, as he made out of Paris, if he wished to have more to do with them. That

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nobleman's reply was brief and hurried. He had no more taste for His Eminence's audience, and so escaped. The careless two, however, were arrested at Vitry and brought back to Paris in the core of a small army. This time Richelieu was not to be trifled with. While all boys of blood and gentlemen of heart wept to see, Bouteville and Des Chapelles were beheaded at the Place de Grève, and the child De Bergerac was beaten for his woe.

Actually contemporary, however, with Monsieur de Bergerac in this traditional custom of gentlemen were swordsmen no less courageous, and, since now the play was thoroughly developed, more able than any in the past. Every member of any company of guards or musketeers fought daily for the exercise and often enough to wipe out some fancied slight. Men like the Chevalier d'Andrieux kept tally of the men they killed but were not typical and, if they scraped quarrels with known gentlemen, risked assassination at the hand of lacqueys. The rule, excepting with soldiers, was an occasional passage at arms between men of credit unable otherwise to settle a dispute. Professional duellists were suspect and despised, and the soldiers fought only among themselves and so were no menace to men of the sword peacefully prosecuting a career at court.

But all these men, when on the ground, might be disclosed to be fencers of distinction if compared with those of earlier generations.

Little by little the poignard had been discarded, and by 1639 only the rapier was held, at least among the military, to be correct. Thus, the play had become concentrated and specialized, and no man of any pretense to gentility grew to young manhood without a tuition in fencing that would have amazed the cockerels of Henry III. Richelieu's edicts had compelled duelling in secret, in out-of-the-way corners, back of the Carmes-Déchaux or in the Pré-aux-Clercs, but in 1639, enfeebled by his terminal cancer and the sorry state of affairs abroad, the Cardinal-Duke had no energy to enforce his rulings, and even his own gentlemen in the guards settled casual disagreements with steel and went unreprimanded provided that they did so without ostentation and in private. Though not so publicly practised, therefore, nor so cruelly concluded, since the qualification *à outrance* had been much modified, duelling in the middle of the Seventeenth Century was in its apogee, and duellists were generally of a higher proficiency than ever before. A fact delighted in by Monsieur de Bergerac, who was so romantic as to believe it no less obligatory to a gentleman with a high mind and intrepid

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spirit than had been jousting to those paladins of an earlier day, Du Guesclin, Chandos, or De Manny.

Le Bret, however, was not romantic. Having been once actually at points, he had seen enough of jeopardy in the name of personal honour and was disinclined to proceed in such courses. Privately, he pitied Monsieur de Bergerac, whose attitude, his acumen declared to him, would cause him a life of alarums if indeed it permitted life at all, after one or two meetings upon the ground. Le Bret's only impulse toward a career of arms, one seldom pursued by young men of his class, was bred by a desire to be acquainted with gentlemen who might one day patronize him in his actual ambition, which was to achieve his fortune as a lawyer. His was not one of the great bourgeois families of Paris, like the Molé, the Damour, Flécelles, Villebichot, Sanguin, or Mesmes, and so was incapable of effectively furthering his progress toward Parliament or of recommending his abilities to men of influence near to the Cardinal-Duke. The Le Bret had, in the past, held only moderate positions as men of the robe, and if one of them, by becoming for the space of a campaign or two a man of the sword, might better his credit in his acknowledged sphere, the stakes were worth the game. Henri, himself,

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however, had in the short space of a day come to have but little stomach for it. Casteljaloux's complete indifference to his existence might, he shrewdly suspected, be indicative of an attitude which he would find to be general among his fellow guardsmen, and he saw no wealth of clients in men so inimically disposed. But for the fact that the rapier he wore across his haunch in some sort committed him, and that he had spent a great many of his father's pistoles upon his equipment, he would have forsworn the wars and returned straightway to his books and sober inclinations. He was not, he recognized, as was his friend Savinien, whose singular agony of repentance at the moment seemed to be that, on the day previous, unknowing of what lay before him, he had sold his golden spurs.

The memory of these spurs brought Monsieur de Bergerac, naturally enough, directly to that of Madame de Neuville, and a bitter joy invaded him at the thought that the beautiful Mado would repent of her cruelty in his behalf when, a few years hence, she would behold, upon the Rue Saint-Honoré, faring toward the Louvre, his coach bearing upon it his marshal's bâton. Chatillon, Brézé, Meilleray, Guébriant, and Bergerac . . . how fittingly his name sounded, conjoined with those of other marshals who en-

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joyed, since they were already afield, a head start of him but had so far made little of their advantages. He would, he was inclined to think, ask the government of Guyenne from the King and so be in a position to push somewhat the fortunes of his good friend Castel-Sarrasin, who, he believed, had demesnes in that province. Turning down the Rue des Saints-Pères, he forgot to swagger and mused very pleasantly. It was astonishing, he reflected, how his new career buttressed him away from all the morbid sensitiveness of his nature, protected him how thoroughly from meditations upon his nose, his abortive struggle for a training as a scholar, his grievance against his father, and his dreary realization of the masquerade of his gentility. The coat he wore had marvellously externalized him, and it was his intention to continue in it lest he be thrown once again back upon himself, a prey to the intrinsic desires of his nature. In an unwelcome but, fortunately, brief moment of self-revelation, he was forced to admit that a career devoted to the intellectual, not to the physical, aspects of life was that one for which he was intended, but he was quick to compel his mind to its more objective function and so to resume his spirits. He must, he told himself, be upon his guard against such fathomings of self. He must master

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his part as a swaggering, drinking, fighting swordsman, and, in truth, he believed himself already tolerably proficient in his lines. Suddenly he remembered to swagger. He did so, so thoroughly that he almost overthrew Le Bret who, at his side, paced like a jennet, no more warlike than a lawyer's clerk, which, at the moment, he was.

When they were come to the Hôtel des Essarts in the Rue Vaugirard, they found two hundred lacqueys before its doors, quarrelling for place, avoiding the hooves of the horses they attended, and exchanging anecdotes touching one another's masters. These made way for them, since Monsieur de Carbon's liveries of war were familiar, and the friends proceeded to the antechamber. This was crowded. Members of three companies of guards and two of musketeers thronged it, jostled, embraced, paid one another compliments, and compared notes upon mistresses. Le Bret, the sense of his physical inferiority of these brown, active men hard upon him, looked at his boots and wished himself safely back in the maw of some legal discussion in the Salle des Pas-Perdus. De Bergerac, however, resolute in his capacity as a man of blood, asked a comrade what all this might mean.

The guardsman questioned clapped him upon

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a shoulder. "It means," he yelled, so as to abash the clatter of voices about them, "that to-morrow we ride. In yonder, with old Coup-d'Épée, by which name I am pleased to designate Monsieur de Carbon de Casteljaloux, the first captain of the age, are at this instant Messieurs de Tréville, de Gassion, de Rantzau, and de Saint-Preuil. Whither we ride, I cannot say, but we will be told soon enough. In all probability to join Meilleraye before Hesdin."

He recognized a friend, a Black Musketeer, and seized him in his arms. "Ah, my friend," he shouted, "how brave you are! And blooming like the rose! Does she treat you well, your mistress? No? Ah, the cruel one. Do you tell me that she does not surrender before that splendid countenance? What, that delicately disciplined moustache? Good, then she is constructed of stone. Quit her, she is not mortal!"

Gratified by these cordialities, Monsieur de Bergerac was looking around him for Castel-Sarrasin in order that he might personally bestow their like when the doors to Monsieur des Essarts' closet were thrown open. Instantly the tumult was stilled. Guardsmen and musketeers parted to leave the way clear for the captains, and while they uncovered nudged one another for space to see. Monsieur de Tréville, compact,

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aquiline, and fully bearded *à la Béarnais*, strolled slowly, acknowledging salutes, stopping now to pinch the cheek of one of his musketeers, now to examine a member of Des Essarts' company of guards, since from this were recruited the musketeers of the King. Gassion, short and with legs grotesquely bowed, walked swiftly, looking down his long nose and hoicking along at his side a rapier but little shorter than himself. Rantzau rolled, a barrel of a man yet with no fat on him, his weathered face drawn with the effort of the day's sobriety. Saint-Preuil and Casteljalous came last, arm in arm, the former tall, black, and handsome, and somewhat cold to the greetings he occasioned. He was of the family of Jussac in Angoumois, a hot man beneath his reserve, but ungenial, and was more feared than loved by those who served under him. An excellent soldier, he was beheaded two years later by Richelieu, if those who accused him spoke only a quarter of the truth, for ravishing every woman in the Walloon. The truth was that his merits had caused him to be envied by the marshals Brézé and Meilleraye, both allied to His Eminence, the first through marriage, the second by blood. Monsieur de Carbon accompanied these gentlemen to the entresol. The antechamber, save for his own men and those of Des Essarts, his host, was

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emptied of its occupants and after a last salutation the Gascon captain came back through a volley of respectful questions and stood before the closet doors.

He stood before them, straddling, and raised a finger. Instantly the questions ceased. In the silence Monsieur des Essarts might be heard pouring wine, and the delectable gurgle suggested the drinking of toasts. Monsieur de Carbon rubbed his hands.

"Gentlemen," he said, "we ride to-morrow to Mouzon, upon the northeastern frontier. Be so good as to look to your equipments, your horses, and the abilities of your lacqueys, so that nothing may be missing to assist you in this campaign. Embrace your mistresses well to-night, for they will be for some time inaccessible to you, and on no account allow yourselves the luxury of becoming wounded on any occasion whatever. I can spare no one. Gentlemen, I bid you good-night. There will be wine here presently."

He bowed in a thunder of cries, and was about to rejoin Monsieur des Essarts when he perceived Castel-Sarrasin waving his hat in a fashion apparently unnatural to him. He looked closer. He frowned and nodded his head. Castel-Sarrasin came instantly forward, his short cloak well around his shoulders, and stood before him,

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smiling disingenuously and all ears. He bowed very low, and Casteljaloux twitched one of his long drooping curls, so that Castel-Sarrasin instantly resumed his erect bearing, looking like an irritated bird dog.

"And so, monsieur?"

"Monsieur?"

"You are not, that I recall, left-handed?"

"But no, monsieur."

"Well, then, why do you wave your hat thus?"
—he made an outrageous gesture of parody—
"and—ah-ha! a bandage!"

Castel-Sarrasin smiled delightfully. "An old wound, Monsieur de Carbon, that matter in the Valteline, it nips me now and again. I drink," he murmured modestly, "an Anjou wine which turns the blood a little."

Casteljaloux groaned. "Whom did you meet?"
His guardsman drooped in resignation. "Monsieur, I was challenged on a personal matter, and this matter was satisfactorily arranged. Furthermore, monsieur, it is a mere scratch."

"Truly? Well, permit me, your captain, to inform you that you are engaged upon the King's quarrels, not upon your own, and that I am come finally to a vomit because of the imbecilities, the incapacities, and the complete unworthinesses of men such as yourself. Body of God, Monsieur de

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Castel-Sarrasin, you shame me. You shame me, monsieur, and my country. By God, monsieur, I will have no more Gascons. They are grown perfidious and in my old age betray me and my credit with the King. Fifty times fifty times have I grovelled before His Eminence on account of you and your like. Hereafter I myself will arrest you. I will do more, by God, I will execute you. You duel, twin of the Devil, you duel on the very day upon which I am informed of my orders. This was evilly done, monsieur. It destroys me. It breaks my heart and causes me to feel my age." He turned and suddenly tottered upon enfeebled legs, with back bent and head bowed, toward the closet doors.

Castel-Sarrasin, in an agony of remorse, burst into tears. He wailed and beat his breast with his sound hand. "Ah, pig and descendant of pigs that I am, I have caused Monsieur to feel his age. Pity me, monsieur. Forgive me, monsieur. I am of wood, monsieur, a thing insensible to affront. No, no, monsieur, do not pity me. Discharge me, disgrace me, but do not, I implore you, feel your age."

This plea had its effect. Monsieur de Carbon made a prodigious effort. He straightened and sighed heartrendingly. "Be it so, my child. I forgive you. But," he bellowed, "offend no more.

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Any of you." He addressed the entire antechamber. Then he tripped into Monsieur des Essarts and fell to his wine as though he yet had a year to live until his twenty-first birthday.

Castel-Sarrasin was consoled. His relief and that of his comrades at the rejuvenation of their captain was as genuine as it was childlike. Casteljaloux was their father, their protector, and their friend, and the thought that he might one day retire to his estates, his barren lands and ruined châteaux in the South, appalled them to such a degree that, like children, they could not long consider it. As lacqueys filed into the long room with wine they applied themselves to it, and in groups that constantly formed and dissolved, planned the collection of equipments, gamed, or boasted of assignations. Le Bret, who, like Cassio, had but poor and unhappy brains for drinking, became fantastical after one cup and recited elegiacs in a Latin wonderful to hear. Then he fell asleep swiftly and so missed the performance of Monsieur de Bergerac, who, standing upon a table, sang the entire ballad of "Le Brave Cyrano," and wept because, extemporaneously, he was unable to find an adequate rhyme for the name of his dear friend Monsieur de Castel-Sarrasin, or weld it successfully into his chosen metre.

Chapter v

THE WARS

NEXT day, in the morning, the guardsmen of Casteljaloux quit Paris by the Porte Saint-Antoine and, two by two, rode eastward into the Champagne. The wars they fared to join were old wars in which their fathers, save those of Monsieur de Bergerac and Le Bret, had all of them fought and some of them died, and so for them there was no novelty in this approach to combat. None the less, they rode gaily, because fighting was their trade and inaction of a month or two in Paris had given them their fill of that city's wine and wenches and choked, unsavoury streets. It had been very well for a time, their lounging in

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the cabarets, their fencing and duelling with the musketeers with whom they rubbed shoulders in the Rue Vaugirard, opposite the Hôtel de Luxembourg, in which neighbourhood Messieurs de Tréville and des Essarts lived, but the guardsmen of Casteljaloux were not of the *maison du roi*, nor were they attached personally to either King or Cardinal-Duke. With the musketeers and Richelieu's guards it was different. These gentlemen followed their masters or, rather, stayed at home with them and, though without question of doubt brave men, had seen but a few campaigns.

Carbon de Casteljaloux, always a poor courtier, had preferred the field to the *pavillon du roi*, and so, since the death of Monsieur de Sully, who had been a powerful friend in the days of the late king, had remained abroad, where there was always work to be done. The wars which had broken over Europe in 1618 still, in 1639, rumbled without surcease, and as general succeeded general with the changing generations, without any of them bringing peace or conquest, these wars seemed to be eternal. Wallenstein and Tilly and Gustavus were dead, and Créqui and Rohan, who had, for France, opposed the Empire, were also gone. Enghien, so soon to be known as the Great Condé, was not yet of age,

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Turenne was scarce known save as the promising cadet of Monsieur de Bouillon-Sedan, and the abilities of Gassion had not yet been rewarded by the bâton.

In 1639 Richelieu, directing campaigns upon four fronts, had but little talent at his disposal, and the Spanish held him in check with two generals of ability whose threats in Flanders grew always more insistent. The Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand had been trained in the memorable tradition of Parma, and Piccolomini, Duke of Amalfi, had gone to school to Wallenstein when that singular genius had been at the crest of his fortunes. Against these two the Cardinal-Duke had in Flanders but Chatillon and Meilleray, with Guébriant a loud voice somewhere in the background and Brézé nowhere where he could be of use. D'Harcourt, France's one general officer of ability, was prosecuting the Italian campaign, the Prince de Condé, father to Enghien, had disgraced French arms before Fontarabia in Spain, and nowhere in Europe had the prestige of the armies of Louis XIII been authoritatively maintained. Casteljaloux, who had seen a half century of wars, who had charged with Bassompierre at the Pass of Suze, fought, much against his sympathies, for the King at Castelnaudary, been wounded in Catalonia, and left for dead be-

low a bastion at Rochelle, might reflect as he led on for Mouzon that never had matters looked worse for his country than in this June of the year 1639.

His orders were to garrison Mouzon in compliance with the policy of investing all the strong places on the frontier. Hesdin and Thionville were already in the process of circumvallation, and between them lay Chatillon with an army so disposed as to be able to protect both besieging forces. Where Piccolomini was no one seemed to know, but it was Monsieur de Carbon's belief that the Duke of Amalfi, whose friendship the Gascon honourably enjoyed, would surprise either himself in Mouzon or the Sappers at Hesdin or Thionville. Casteljalous could have wished to be in Italy with the Duc d'Harcourt, Cadet-la-Perle, who, despite his pearl earrings, was a better soldier than any of the marshals.

Monsieur de Bergerac, however, saw nothing but glory ahead of him. When he had convinced himself that riding a horse was not so dangerous as it was painful, and when he had accustomed himself to the gratifying sensation of being served by a lacquey, one lent to him by Castel-Sarrasin, he looked forward with joy to each day and revelled in the country air. It was inconceivable that any harm could come to him in

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the company of these veteran soldiers, and the thought of death in battle did not enter his head. He played his part as a swordsman with increasing zest, was every night in his cups, gambling, boasting, and fencing, and twice had the occasion to serve friends who, in strict privacy from their captain's eye, duelled upon pretexts with companions. When they were come to Mouzon and had invested the town he had a reputation and was an individual among his fellows.

Le Bret, however, remained a lawyer's clerk in spite of rapier and cuirass. He observed, at first enviously, then with genuine anxiety, the metamorphosis that had overtaken his friend and marvelled, when, like a Priapus in jackboots, Monsieur de Bergerac's tongue was constantly on the subject of vulgar loves and his nights devoted to them. His schoolfellow seemed to employ a sort of savage concentration upon debauch, drinking the pale wine of the country as if he were a cistern, gaming beyond reason, tumbling wenches as though commanded to do so, by a code. Le Bret had no knowledge of the sweating periods of disgust, the nausea and revulsion, that his friend was forced to overcome in order thus to maintain his footing among his fellows. When he came one day upon Monsieur de Bergerac, seated by a kitchen midden, reciting to a

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bewildered old peasant woman intent on peeling vegetables the more indecent of the poesies of Ronsard, and was naturally astounded, it did not occur to him that the young man was indulging an irresistible desire for a purely mental female companionship and salving his military conscience by causing this to be conducted on the basis of a bawdy monologue. On perceiving Le Bret he leaped to his feet and declared that he wished a woman of intelligent silences whose person did not at once breed temptations of the flesh, and he seemed somewhat put out to be discovered. Le Bret, however, was delighted. Tactlessly, he congratulated his friend on the virtue of such a desire and added insufferably that it pleased him to see that Monsieur de Bergerac was returned to a course of life distinguished by sobriety and dignity. The result of this homily was so immediate and shocking that the beldame fled with her vegetables, squeaking with alarm.

Resuming his complexion as a roistering blade with overtones more exaggerated than ever before, Monsieur de Bergerac exploded with appalling oaths and stamped about like one demented. Paralyzed, Le Bret gaped when Savinien, Savinien his most intimate comrade, fixed him with an eye grown dull with ineffable contempt and ordered him to withdraw. "Mon-

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sieur," he said, "you had once the honour of being my friend, therefore I spare you chastisement for your intolerable impertinence. But, mark, you have the honour no more. Monsieur, you are become odious. Avoid!" and he swaggered off in a fury that the stricken Le Bret could not explain.

In a day or so, Savinien relented and reconferred the honour of his friendship, but to establish beyond peradventure the authentic sinfulness of his nature he was guilty of a serious breach of discipline that his comrades found at first astounding and then admirable. Monsieur de Carbon was mitigating his solitude, for he lived apart from his men, with the pretty wife of a miller, and he had several times informed his officers that this little friend not only contained a great fire in her own vitals but had communicated it to his own. Her ardours, he declared, had made of him a young man again, and he was finding garrison life at Mouzon far more diverting than he could ever have supposed it would be. So that when he surprised Monsieur de Bergerac one day in the act of usurping what had been his alone, his angry astonishment was such that he put sword in hand, and only his fleetness of foot preserved the young man from instant dissolution. For a time it was extremely conjectural

whether Monsieur de Carbon would not avenge his honour, and, ostensibly, that of the miller, by having his guardsman publicly hanged for outrage, but the fascination possessed for him by Monsieur de Bergerac's countenance at length appeased him. He came, after a day, to regard the matter as being in some sort an indication of De Bergerac's mettle and so forgave it, at which De Bergerac's companions became definitely convinced that he was a super-Gascon, whose youth but made his effrontery the more distinguished. Le Bret, after this, became resigned. And since he was man of conscience, godson, in fact, to Arnauld of Porte-Royal, he blamed himself for his friend's damnation, since it was he who had been the acquaintance of Castel-Sarrasin and so was responsible for Savinien's nomination to the guards.

It was not long after this occurrence, however, that public attention was diverted from such matters and fastened upon affairs of moment and immediate concern. Even as Monsieur de Carbon had surmised that he might, his noble friend, the Prince Piccolomini, materialized swiftly out of the countryside around Liége and by a forced march spanned the Ardennes from Huy and massacred out of hand the French army besieging Thionville. Chatillon, dozing some miles away,

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had scarce time to call a council of war when a few remnants of Rantzau's foot came in, and at Mouzon Casteljaloux received the tidings barely an hour before, on the western horizon, the enemy troops appeared. These invested the purlieus of Mouzon without delay, and it became at once apparent that, failing a successful sortie, the town would fall before a blockade.

Casteljaloux, as the ranking officer in garrison, immediately claimed the honour of leading such an expedition, and intended for Sedan to forage for supplies. Spies brought in word that while the Spanish infantry were disposed upon three sides, a regiment of mercenaries guarded the Sedan gate, and this news determined the Gascon captain in his objective. It was one thing to fight soldiers of fortune unconcerned with an omnipotent esprit de corps, but quite another to lead cavalry against foot regiments than which there existed no finer in the world. Had the Spanish flanked Mouzon Sedan-ward, Monsieur de Carbon would have sought replenishment southwest or south. He had fought Parma's system before this and knew no remedy for its sovereign efficiency in the field.

Toward five, therefore, in the afternoon of the first day's siege, their captain came among the Gascon guardsmen and sat upon a wine cask to

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hold his battle parley. His thumbs hooked in his sword belt, he sat with his huge legs apart and discoursed as pleasantly as though he were asking them to an evening's carousal in the Cours-la-Reine. "Gentlemen," he observed, "I have the honour to lead, this evening, a venture which I trust will refill our glasses and restock our platters. My friend Monsieur de Piccolomini, has, by an action which, as a soldier, I am bound to admire at the same time that, as a Frenchman, I am forced to deplore it, completely defeated our troops before Thionville and has therefore, as you very well know, placed us in the position in which Monsieur Jean Guiton found himself at La Rochelle. We will, therefore, at an hour after nightfall, attempt a sally which I have not the smallest doubt in the world will restore to us the advantage and enable us to hold out until the arrival of reinforcements from Monsieur de Chatillon. Be so kind, therefore, as to put yourselves in readiness. Commend yourselves to God, who is, I have always been taught, a Huguenot God, but upon that I will not insist, and to your ladies, who will assuredly not receive you back into their soft arms and softer beds unless you do credit to the armies of His Majesty. And touching His Majesty I would ask you to forget what he looked like, when last you saw him, in what

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fashion he addressed you, and the manner in which he was pleased to treat your captain. Remember, gentlemen, you will fight and perhaps die, for the King, not for a king, nor for one whose morals are, lamentably, those of Italy, and whose minister wears a cassock instead of a cuirass. Gentlemen, you will fight, in other words, as Gascons have always fought, for your God, your king, and your ladies. That is all. I have the honour to recommend myself to your friendship."

Monsieur de Carbon then rose from his cask and bowed. After which, amid applause, he went among his guardsmen, embraced many, including Monsieur de Bergerac, saluted all, and returned to his quarters where his little friend, the miller's wife, burnished his steel for him and paid him the compliment of being charmingly hysterical at the thought of his approaching danger.

His guardsmen prepared themselves, and the younger ones promised each other fifty Spanish morions for each comrade killed. The veterans contented themselves with less extravagant declarations. They were well aware that their captain had been many years leading swords against the Spanish and in spite of it his collection of morions remained small.

Monsieur de Bergerac, however, comported

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himself as though the entire business of this sortie had been arranged in order that he might display a peculiar excellence as a mounted man at arms. His successes upon the ground, having been multiple, had bred in him so formidable a self-confidence that with but little urging he would have considered himself immortal. He entertained no doubt but that he would so distinguish himself as to compel Monsieur de Carbon to recommend him for a lieutenancy, and his attitude of jubilation irked companions who understood very well the difference between duelling and sword work in a *mêlée*. It was in their minds that this furious Gascon cockerel, in the eventuality of a cavalry charge upon pikes or muskets, would be astonished at what might occur, and when he asserted that he hoped to be damned if he failed to cleave at least a dozen Aragonese from scalp to brisket they smiled, and a little sourly. As for Le Bret, he forebore to burnish his accoutrements and spent the intervening hours upon his knees. He suffered from a premonition of sudden death and a severe colic, in which latter malady he resembled the heroic Henry IV, who had, as all knew, been in miserable case before Rocroy.

When the long June twilight had yielded place to darkness they sat their mounts within the gate

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held ready for the egress of defending troops. At Monsieur de Carbon's invitation to proceed this was opened, and the company came out upon the flat terrain beyond the walls and saw at a distance of a quarter mile the myriad thumbs of flame that marked the positions of the enemy. Toward Sedan, however, these beacons were fewer and seemed separated, somewhat, from their fellows.

Casteljaloux was gratified. The mercenaries, once formidable under Gallas, were, without him to lead them, weary of war and especially of the arrogance of their Spanish allies. That singular Castilian pride that, a century before, had forbidden to the Great Constable of Bourbon—turned rebel to the petty tyranny of Francis I—the hospitality of Charles-Quint's *grandees*; that, on the second night of the Armada's combat with Howard's fleet off the Wight, had prevented Sidonia from winning what might have been a significant victory, now caused Piccolomini's regular infantry to abstain from fraternizing with men who fought for gain alone, and so left these isolated and vulnerable to attack. Casteljaloux had counted upon just such an occasion, but he congratulated himself chiefly upon the fact that the Duke of Amalfi had not accompanied this army before Mouzon. That general, he knew, would have permitted no such disposi-

tion of a besieging force, whatever might be the scruples of Spanish pride. Without the city walls the company advanced at a trot in the direction of Sedan until it became evident that the darkness would not much longer conceal it. Then Monsieur de Carbon halted. He turned in his saddle and admonished his men for the last time.

"Be so good, gentlemen, as to charge in my dust. Do not scatter, or engage other troops than those that lie directly before us. They are foot soldiers who have been beaten by the Swedes and one or twice by the levies of Monsieur le duc Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar, and are therefore not invincible. But upon their flanks lie the best infantry in Europe, tercios of the Low Countries, soldiers trained by greater men and a greater system than, unfortunately, any existing to-day. Therefore, gentlemen, we will not disturb them to-night. Another time, perhaps, but not to-night. I perceive that at this moment pikes are assembling on our front—" he peered, then lifted his sword—"and so, gentlemen," he said cordially, "let us go forward."

The thunder of many hooves in concert, the scattered yells of outposts, split the night. Into a thin *rafale* of musketry and a thinner resistance with steel the guards of Casteljaloux hurtled,



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clove through, and so were gone into the open country, northwest by north toward Sedan.

All but Monsieur de Bergerac. A musket ball that, once out of a thousand discharges, might achieve its mark, had penetrated his body through the armhole of his cuirass and cast him from his saddle insensible upon the ground. In the dawn, while his comrades were riding easily from farm to farm in a countryside fat with provender, he was borne back into Mouzon by a brother-minor and a peasant who sought to steal his spurs.

He returned to consciousness to hear a sound of praying and to prevent the spoliation of his equipment, but the hurt that had befallen him was so painful and so disastrous to his hopes for a martial triumph that he lay for two months without energy or desire of any kind. Monsieur de Carbon and his company made a safe return and came daily to visit him where he reposed in what had once been the refectory of an Ursuline convent, but they could do nothing to cheer him. He became convinced that there worked some malison upon his fortunes, and, like Charles IX, dreamed of faceless men who beckoned to him with the bloodied stumps of wrists from which the hands had been sheared away. What these dreams portended he could not tell, though he suspected that they came as chastisements for his warlike

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ambition. He grew perilously gaunt, and the measure of his melancholy might have been concisely judged by the fact that he suffered Le Bret to read to him daily from the doctrinal tracts of the Jesuits, and spoke almost harshly to the peasant girl who tended him because, after the manner of many honest wenches in the Champagne, she took no more care to cover her breasts than she did to veil her broad and sunburned face.



Chapter vi

CHRISTOPHE DE CHAM- PAGNE

IN DUE course he was recovered, but when he got upon his legs again the siege of Mouzon had been lifted, and Casteljaloux, against his will and with expressions of genuine regret, had been forced to abandon him to join Saint-Preuil at Doullens. When Piccolomini had withdrawn his tercios and Meilleraye, having sat down with great circumstance before Hesdin, had captured it, Monsieur de Bergerac returned alone through an empty land to Paris. For many months he was unable to bear steel upon his body and so resigned his membership in his company and limped, gaunt and dispirited, about the town, at

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his wit's end again how to administer his existence. In April, 1640, when for weeks he had been subsisting upon his winnings at play, he bethought himself of Madame de Neuville, and though he held no great hopes of being received, waited upon her at her hôtel in the Marais. He had made himself as fine as he was able with the remnants of his guardsman's cloth and a plume that somewhat restored the presentable qualities of his hat, but the maître d'hôtel of Monsieur le baron stared at him not without insolence and only admitted him after Monsieur de Bergerac had promised in a low but fervent tone to choke him with his own teeth did he not at once announce him. Then, sombrely, he waited the frigid words that Madame was not receiving. With numbed fingers, for it was still cold, he did his best to smarten the dingy ribbons at his knees, and moistened his eyebrows a little to smooth them to a more precise alignment. He arranged his curls upon his shoulders, settled his short cloak, no longer distinguished with insignia, and prepared for the worst. He heard steps, and was so confident of dismissal that he failed to perceive that they were light steps and accompanied by the sweep and rustle of rich stuffs. Then, before his incredulous eyes, the beautiful Mado entered in a little whirlwind of perfume and, before he

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might make his bow, embraced him and kissed him upon both hollow cheeks.

She was imperious in a sable velvet, but still tender, and the mask, the fashionable mimi which, upon entering, she had held before her purple eyes, she cast immediately from her. Her hair, the colour of autumnal leaves, had been rinsed in orange water and then arranged, over the ears, in flat coils and dusted with Cyprian powder. The neck of her gown was cut low upon her breasts and embroidered with the point lace of Mechlin; her fine arms were lost in full sleeves slashed to show a purple doublure, and her little hands in gloves of silk with overturned wrist-pieces of velvet upon which had been sewn a certain number of sapphires. Beneath all she wore the busc and vertugadin, staying appliances with justice believed capable of protecting the virtue of any woman since they inclosed her as though in armour from bosom to mid-thigh, and for an instant, Monsieur de Bergerac was teased by an errant speculation as to whether his cousin still had doubts as to his respect, his continence, or his self-control.

He looked at Madame de Neuville, at her small head, her delicate, sensual face, and the affection that was a light upon it, and suddenly, to his consternation, burst into tears. He sobbed like

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a baby, hearing that Monsieur de Neuville had had it from Monsieur de Cavoye, who had had it from Monsieur des Essarts, who in turn had had it from Monsieur de Carbon's private communications, that Savinien was the finest sword and the most promising soldier upon the eastern frontier and that nothing but the mischance of a wound received in battle had prevented the cadet of Cyrano from earning his lieutenancy.

He was still kissing Madame's gloved hands and snuffling his emotion into a more pacific tenor when Monsieur le baron, having punctiliously caused himself to be announced to his lady, entered the salon. Christophe de Champagne was in fawnskin boots, the tops of which were wide, slack, and overturned. He was spurred. His breeches were of chamois, and his sleeveless surcoat likewise. A round, flat collar of plain lace ringed his brown throat, and he wore, instead of a rapier, a poignard sheathed in painted leather studded with bronze nails. He had been hunting at Saint-Cloud with the King. Like his wife he was fair, and his long hair, a little dishevelled by the wind, gave him something of the appearance of a lion. Ten years the senior of Monsieur de Bergerac, he was a little gray, though his person was muscular-appearing and still lithe.

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"Madame," he said pleasantly and bowed. To Monsieur de Bergerac he gave his hand, ignoring that gentleman's obvious discomposure, then asked his wife's permission to take a cup, since the day had been a hard one. The King, he said, had flown his own gyrfalcon and had shown good sport, four herons and as many hares. Monsieur le Grand, with a cast of Peregrine tiercels, passage hawks both, had fared moderately with rabbits but had observed to Monsieur de Marcillac that had he trained the King's gyrfalcon he could have shown a young stag killed at one stoop, a remark, said Monsieur de Neuville, excusable only in a Gascon and, even then, only if the Gascon were drunken. The King, it was well known, was the first falconer in France. Himself, he said, had made a poor day's diversion. Of the four Peregrine haggards sent to him from England by the sister of Monsieur de Ruvigny, who was, as Monsieur de Bergerac doubtless knew, the Countess of Southampton, he had lost two which, having refused to fly to lures, killed and departed, perhaps again across channel. Such was the danger of hunting with hawks caught and trained after they had assumed mature plumage. Monsieur de Neuville drank his cup, swiftly changed the subject, and, looking suddenly in-

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tent, asked Monsieur de Bergerac how the war proceeded in the East.

Monsieur de Bergerac said that he no longer had the honour to serve with Monsieur de Carbon de Casteljaloux, but that he believed that it was proceeding very well.

Madame de Neuville said, "My friend, monsieur, was severely wounded and was forced to resign his membership. Now that he is whole again he desires employment for his sword but knows not how to secure it."

"*Tenez!*" murmured her lord.

Monsieur de Bergerac examined the floor. He was embarrassed by what seemed to be a petition for assistance and even more discomfited by Monsieur le Baron's word of mild surprise.

There fell a silence.

Madame la baronne gazed tenderly at Monsieur le baron, who considered Monsieur de Bergerac with an expression at once genial and speculative. Monsieur de Bergerac continued gazing between his shoes, which, he noticed, were miserably battered and even more evilly beribboned than he had supposed. There was perspiration upon his temples.

"Why, monsieur, there is a business easily mended." Monsieur de Neuville passed his now empty cup once or twice beneath his nose.

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"I have the honour to captain a company in a regiment of foot tolerably well known in the *maison du roi*. A regiment commanded by Monseigneur de Conti and composed solely of gentlemen who woo prosperity with blades. If Monsieur will have patience for a day or two it may be that there will occur a vacancy—if Monsieur pleases to make his use of it.

Monsieur de Bergerac, weakened, as he recognized, by his wound, his late precarious system of life, and the unexpected kindness with which he had been received, felt tears pushing once again against his eyeballs.

"Monsieur is kind," he said, and, clenching one hand, strove to drive his finger nails into his palm so that he might direct his mind upon some objective uneasiness.

"But no! Monseigneur, whom God has made carelessly, though he is none the less full of heart and a true Bourbon, has need of known men, and from Monsieur de Cavoye I already know your temper, monsieur."

Madeleine de Neuville rose. "I leave you." She kissed her fingers to her cousin, flung at her husband, or at his bowed head, since he was already in obeisance, a look full of gratitude, and disappeared. Monsieur de Neuville became instantly less contained.

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"My friend, await a word from me within two days. Swords such as yours must not gather rust. And in the meantime permit me, since I am many years your senior, and my family has been fortunate, to offer you my assistance in other ways."

With tact, he forbore to glance anywhere save in the eyes of Monsieur de Bergerac.

"A tailor," he said softly and with great kindness, "or anyone else who may be of assistance to you."

And he smiled, poured out two measures of a Norman brandy, and lifted his cup.

An hour later Monsieur de Bergerac took his departure from the Hôtel de Neuville with a purse containing five hundred pistoles and a heart fat with joy.

And reflecting, afterward, upon this generosity on the part of a nobleman whose ancestors had borne coat-arms since Rollo had been duke in Normandy, and whose family had never been associated with small trade, either in Bergamo or anywhere else, Monsieur de Bergerac was fain to weep once more. He wished passionately to kill somebody for Christophe de Champagne, to save his life at the risk, nay, at the loss of his own, to shield him in battle, cry up his fame at court, found a faction to obtain for him the bâton, the office of Grand Equerry, now

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soiled in the possession of Cinq-Mars, or any other benefit which he might fancy. As for his lady, the incomparable Madeleine, the adoration with which her cousin Savinien now dwelt upon her defied computation. It was pleasant, also, to remember the face of the *maître d'hôtel* as Monsieur le baron had accompanied Savinien, his hand upon his shoulder, in person to his door. And still more satisfying was the thought of the secret but terrific kick with which, unknown to his noble host, Savinien had been able to warm that retainer's buttocks when he was gone in front to call up a carriage. The day, in fact, had been one that he would never forget, and he could have wished that Le Bret, pining for the Palais de Justice, leagues off at Doullens, might have been with him to share in his joy.

This joy, too, unlike so many delightful qualities in life, remained not only unassailed, but next day, was crescent. At the Croix de Lorraine he was met by Monsieur de Neuville and three of that peerless nobleman's friends, Messieurs de Cuigy, de Bourgogne, and de Brissailles. Nothing could have been more gracious than the manner of these gentlemen, who set him at his ease, informed him that already he was a known soldier and that if only for the length of his rapier he would be welcome in Conti's foot. When a

little in wine they told him that, though certainly more considerable than Enghien's, his nose lent to his countenance the same eagle-like expression hitherto only identified with that impetuous prince, and that they foresaw his glory already rampant upon his face. Monsieur de Bergerac was lightly disturbed at these remarks since they recalled, in a small degree, the unspeakable ribaldries of Maître Grangier upon the same subject. But he recognized that these gentlemen spoke to please and not to mock, which was, save in an infinitely small measure, true. So he thanked them for their civilities and at a late hour was still in their company, greatly exhilarated and reaching that state of mental and physical satisfaction with himself and with life that in time would compel the recitation of the ballad of "le brave Cyrano."

Next day, at the Louvre, King Louis drummed upon the panes of the casements that overlooked the square court opposite to the church of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois and meditated a resolution that would have still further gratified Monsieur de Bergerac had he known of it. King Louis, more bored than usual, had it in mind to quit Paris in a little time and open in person that year's campaign before Arras. There existed in Paris, for His Majesty, no diversions, and he

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was weary of playing barber to his gentlemen. No friend of his had been executed at the instance of the Cardinal-Duke for some months, and so his singular interest in the grimaces made at death by former intimates had been denied to him. Even the pleasure that it gave him, ordinarily, to remember the astonishing amount of blood that Vitry's swords had released from the massacred Concini, in the very court into which he looked, was grown somewhat faint. And Cinq-Mars was deserting him more and more frequently for the lovely and jocund De l'Orme. Life was growing even more intolerable than it had been before, a fact almost incredible, since there had never been a time when Louis XIII had not found life so tedious as barely to be borne. He beat his riding whip against his boot and, followed by his tracies—sad-eyed little dogs whose lives were no more inspiriting than his own—he left his closet and proceeded to the long chamber where he held his court.

Guards with halberds stood at intervals along its walls, no more lifelike in appearance than the empty mannequins of damascened steel behind them, the suits of armour taken by a greater monarch, long ago at Marignano. Noblemen and their ladies strolled and ogled, awaiting the Presence, or yawned candidly, regretting that en-

livening influence of other days, Madame de Chevreuse, now almost constantly in exile. The old Prince de Condé, his hands covered with filth rendered the more revolting by the diamonds upon his fingers and his thumbs, whined to Conti, his hunchbacked son, a tale of lawsuits, while behind him Ruvigny, a gentleman of small fortune but great heart, meditated upon his mistress, Mademoiselle de Rohan, one of the greatest ladies in France. Brézé sneered at everyone who cared to look in his direction; Longueville dozed and dreamed of Mademoiselle de Bourbon; Chevreuse, the Duke, dozed and dreamed of nothing at all, and Cinq-Mars, the favourite, pinched his cheeks to give them a rosy colour. Richelieu, the Eminent Personage, as Gui Patin called him, was not present. He was ailing, and the goosefeathers in which, at the Palais du Cardinal, he reclined, were doing little to ease the agony in his body. Save, however, for his absence, the court was as it always was, and Louis, entering, felt his boredom grow but the more profound.

Madame de Montbazon, a great beauty, made her curtsy. The King looked at her, then reached suddenly forward and touched her cheek with a finger. He then examined this finger without interest and said, "Is it a good paint?" and passed on

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without waiting for a reply. He saw Gassion standing alone, looking at nothing and dreaming of battles. "Monsieur," observed the King, "you have an appearance of melancholy."

"Sire, I have wounds——"

"Perhaps you will die of them," speculated his master, and the thought cheered him. Cinq-Mars had now transferred his pinchings to the lobes of his ears, and Louis, perceiving a green favour in his wide, overturned collar of Spanish lace, snarled like a wolf.

"Are you a clerk, then, Monsieur le Grand, to stand prinking and rolling calf's eyes at a trollop's ribbon?"

The Grand Equerry sneered at this Majesty. With absurd impudence he fell to examining his fingers and forbore to make obeisance.

"Sire," he murmured, "I sometimes prefer a trollop's favour to a king's——"

"Speak louder," screamed Louis, with tears of vexation in his heavy eyes.

"Sire, I but said that if the King preferred I should remove the trollop's favour——"

His master shrugged. "Bah," he said, "it suits your complexion." He fell to gnawing his nails; then, suddenly, addressed himself again to Gassion.

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"Monsieur, we go in person before Arras. His Eminence will make the business known."

The little Gascon bowed as gracefully as his bowed legs would permit him. What he said was, "Sire, our soldiers will be invincible." Privately he reflected that the soldiers would be further discouraged. He knew perfectly well what effect the presence of the King had upon armies. Louis XIII was a prince of absolute physical courage and in his youth had led in a number of hazardous campaigns, but since the Cardinal-Duke was grown invincible that great man would suffer his tamed monarch to expose himself no longer to dangers. Louis de Bourbon was nothing; but the King, the King was all. Therefore, before Arras, His Majesty would expect deeds of madness until, vicariously, he had become once more a hero and his singular imagination had been a little revived by a sight of bloodshed. Then he would return to Paris, leaving many good men dead, and disquiet in the minds, already not too active, of the marshals. Nevertheless, it might not be prevented. Hunting, Gassion recognized, had ceased to amuse royalty for the time being. It must have its slaughter on a more considerable scale.

So was the court of France held until the King retired. He did so, after a little time, kicking his

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tracies before him and a little consoled by their yelps. Nothing was going well with him. Besides his rift with Henri d'Effiat de Cinq-Mars, wearing Marion's elm-coloured favour under his very eyes, he had quarrelled again with Mademoiselle d'Hautefort. He regained his closet and sat down to write in full a record of this quarrel. He had a casket filled with such records, every word that he had ever said to her or to Mademoiselle de Lafayette and their replies. Thus occupied, the *tædium vitæ* that was destroying him was for a time allayed.

In due course His Eminence made the great news known to Paris that the King would in person superintend the siege of Arras when the spring weather was grown clement. Monsieur de Bergerac, with all his military ardour blown again to flame, took these tidings as but another indication of a good fortune that seemed now to be perpetually at his shoulder. His great new friends, Messieurs de Cuigy, de Bourgogne, and de Brissailles, had supported his nomination to Conti's foot, and in a little time he was elected to that fellowship and consorted on terms of equality, and on his part of adoration, with Monsieur de Neuville. When that nobleman transferred himself in May to the cavalry commanded by the Marshal de Meilleraye it was only after assuring

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his wife's kinsman that his eye would remain upon him and that his good offices would be constantly at his service. As for Madame de Neuville, when, in early June, Conti's foot marched, every gentleman beribboned like a maypole, for the north, she sent the cadet of Cyrano five hundred pistoles in a purse of embroidered satin and a likeness of herself wrought on a golden medal.

He had friends, money, position, and a mistress whose love for him might be platonic or merely familiar, but still was love. And the King was to be before Arras. Already in his mind's eye Monsieur de Bergerac beheld himself writing history with his sword, inspiring epics to which he only hoped Racan might do justice, and in a little time, receiving the bâton and the government of provinces from Louis, who was not, he hoped, for nothing called The Just.

Chapter vii

THE END OF CYRANO THE SOLDIER

IN A little house behind the siege works that ringed round the old city of Arras, Monsieur de Chatillon banked his nightly game of lansquenet. Punting to his play were the ancient Monsieur de Pontis and the gentlemen De Bourgogne, De Cuigy, De Brissailles, and De Bergerac. At another table Monsieur de Meilleraye gamed with noblemen, Grammont, called the Comte de Guiche, Cinq-Mars, and De Vardes, at bassette, the new pastime, and in both companies the play was high. Chatillon, losing a thousand pistoles, arose from the table. He excused himself upon a pretext, and Monsieur de Bourgogne smiled.

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"Look out the window," he murmured to the cadet of Cyrano, "there is no wind, but I promise you that nevertheless a tree will be dancing as in a hurricane." Doing as he was told, De Bergerac saw that this was true. A young tree in the garden below was bending and tossing like a live thing gone mad, and by its trunk the marshal might be discerned as the author of its activity. "It relieves him," said De Bourgogne sympathetically, and fell to counting his winnings.

Presently Chatillon reappeared. His brow was smooth again, and as De Bourgogne took the bank he said genially, "Gentlemen, I once lost ten thousand to Messieurs de Créqui and de Saint-Luc. But I gained that sum and its twin from them before dawn. Come, let us see the *réjouissance* card." It was a queen, Roxane, she of diamonds, and since the cards were the marshal's and painted by Jehan Volay, this queen was beautifully counterfeited. "Madame," said Chatillon, "I have always very honourably served queens. Grant me a little fortune." He punted while Monsieur de Bergerac marvelled at him.

Monsieur de Bergerac had been for a fortnight before Arras and so far had found no opportunity to achieve some creditable feat of arms and so come to the attention of the King. This was, he felt, due entirely to the manner in which Cha-

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tillon was conducting the siege. Chatillon, it was very well known, was the laziest soldier in France, a prodigious fat man who would wage war only in countrysides where the food and wine were good and the beds soft. Though he was the first Huguenot in France, grandson to the illustrious Coligny, and a noble who could mount 4,000 gentlemen in his tail, he preferred the indulgence of the flesh to the cultivation of the spirit and did nothing to advance his career. He was very brave at fighting, and on the field an able general, but he would never try conclusions at all unless forced thereto by uncomfortable quarters, interference with his diet, or a necessity to defend his life. His passion was for play, and he blamed his ill fortune, which was notorious, on the affection of his duchess, who was very beautiful but cold. He would say in genuine sorrow that his lady was lovely, but as for him, he could wish that she were less virtuous so that, if only for a time, the cards might run his way. Chance, he declared, and a fond woman, never in nature come to the same man. Besides which, he would add, he was not worthy of a chaste lady's love.

It was a source of concern to his officers that he had by some magic procured a great bed for his quarters and a Walloon girl to keep it neat.

Also his chef was good and food was plentiful, which discouraged fighting men like Gassion, who foresaw that the marshal, contented before Arras, would not hasten the siege. Gassion was himself the most notable officer in Flanders, and since he lived only for war, chafed at the delay and wished heartily that the Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand, who raided about the city with an army of cavalry, would fall one day upon Châtillon's quarters and destroy his comfort. The little Gascon, who honoured Monsieur de Bergerac with his friendship because of the young man's reputation as a swordsman and the size of his blade, confided to him that unless some mischief were done to the grandson of the great Coligny before midsummer the armies would be still in trenches at Christmas time.

Gassion fascinated Monsieur de Bergerac. He was the exception to the rule that penniless young men must possess for their goals only ambitions to marry heiresses, and succeed therein either by patronage at court or favouritism at the hands of the distinguished military. Gassion had been a penniless Gascon of Pau whose only patrimony had been his sword, and this he had hired to every general of note during the Thirty Years' War. Trained by the great Gustavus, he knew his business as did no other Frenchman of his time,

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though it was not until the morrow of Rocroy that his abilities were fittingly recognized. Though he was inconsiderably statured, swarthy, and hacked all over with battle scars, women of all degrees were mad about him, and he might forty times have married a fortune and retired to enjoy it. But he was one-idea'd and took no comfort in luxury or love. The worst courtier in the world, he had been known to pick his teeth while conversing with a princess of the blood, and he quit a duke's table without excuse because an admiring lady had pressed his foot beneath the table. After the siege of Dôle, when he was come to Dijon to hearten the countryside with his presence, the chief burgher of that noble Burgundian capital led him into the company of above a hundred lovely women, maids and matrons, and informed him that there was not one of them who did not pine to bear him a little Gassion for the glory of France. Yet to this generous speech, especially generous since the burgher's own lady was present, Gassion made no adequate reply. He offered to be agreeable to none of the blushing charmers and returned shortly that he wished his horse to be baited and that presently, since the beast was tired.

One day, in the *pavillon du roi*, he astonished by saying to a great lady who had observed pleas-

antly to him that she could think of no greater honour than to be his wife, "Nobody could," and had been angry at the laughter. To the Princess de Conti who assured him that he had done great things he replied, "That goes without saying," and had been surprised at her surprise. "*Mordioux*," he would mutter, "cows and women, they are all the same to me," and he saw no humour in a damsel's retort that bulls and Gassions were one in her mind. He was, in fact, a singular little man when not at the head of troops, but enemy captains held him in high esteem, and he was known as the lion of the French. Piccolomini believed him second only to himself, and ridiculed Richelieu for keeping him riveted to his colonelcy.

To Monsieur de Bergerac, Chatillon and Gassion were the most markable personalities in Flanders, the one for his neglect of his great inheritance and position, the other for his redoubtable usage of his one talent and his contempt for the conventions of his day. The cadet of Cyrano, as time passed, was becoming himself a little mistrustful of achieving fortune as a hanger-on of princes and a puppet correctly ribboned whose smirks and bows might gain him a couch with a coronet impanelled upon the head boards. Gassion, he reflected, might be right. He never sought to be other than himself, and what he was de-

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signed to do, he did. Uncomfortably Monsieur de Bergerac confessed to himself that, even after a year as a soldier, he was still conscious of playing a part. This gave him so much pain that he fought a duel one morning with an Alsatian gentleman who had made an error common in strangers, and he had the misfortune to kill him. The Alsatian, without the excuse of wine, had remarked that since the weather was warm, it would have seemed kind in Monsieur de Bergerac to wear a hat not only upon his head but upon his nose, since this last was too large a bit of humanity to share a covering with anything but itself. Instantly, Monsieur de Bergerac saw that here was an opportunity again to convince himself of his authentic ferocity. The Alsatian fenced well but wildly and was buried privately, as even his seconds admitted that his affront had been gross. Monsieur de Bourgogne served his friend and perceived afterward that a volume of Peiresc had been left by his principal upon the field. Returning this, he had been further mystified to witness Monsieur de Bergerac tear this volume in pieces and burst into tears. Monsieur de Bourgogne laid the matter to nerves and, being a man of breeding, did not mention it abroad.

And during all this time Chatillon nightly played lansquenet with the four inseparable

comrades of Conti's foot, and there was no glory to be had from the clash of arms. Gassion's prediction seemed, in fact, in a fair way to be realized when, one hot night in July, Meilleraye failed to come for his game of bassette and appeared very late with words only for his fellow marshal's ear. Chatillon accompanied him without, and when he returned was in a state of great mental agony. The gentlemen there present rose in alarm and thought to hear some fatal tidings, and the expression upon their commander's face precisely mirrored their suspicions. "Gentlemen," said he, "Monseigneur has permitted himself a deed unworthy of a Prince and a blood relative of Her Majesty the Queen. He has seized, as might any cut-purse, a victual train intended to feed us and got clean away without waiting to dispute his action with the cavalry of Monsieur de la Meilleraye. He has also had the discourtesy to send me warning that he will recommend a sortie for to-morrow at a time that will be inconvenient for us all. Not content to rob me of my dinner in the future, he will to-morrow prevent me from enjoying what foods I still have left."

The company relaxed, and the gentlemen of Conti's foot concealed their jubilation with little moans of commiseration. The Cardinal-Infante had at last forced Chatillon to bestir himself. He

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preferred death to a leaner diet than was his wont, and action was toward.

Next day, at noon time, the besieging armies stood to arms and prepared to engage the enemy. Meilleraye's cavalry composed one flank, the foot held the centre, drawn up behind another unit of cavalry commanded by the Comte de Guiche, and the artillery with Rantzau's Lorrainers, once commanded by Saxe-Weimar, supported the other flank. In reserve the *maison du roi*, with Louis himself at its head, was drawn up to inspect the battle as though this promised to be as diverting as the play at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Chatillon, his vast person unprotected by any steel, back or breastplate or even helmet, since such gear cramped him, sat a great roan gelding fifty paces to the front of Conti's foot and seemed asleep. In reality he was as angry as his lethargic nature permitted him to be. The Cardinal-Infante, true to his warning, had deliberately interfered with his luncheon, and somewhere in the core of his colossal body the spirit of his grandfather stirred and compelled resentment. Monsieur de Bergerac, leaning on a pike in the front rank of his regiment, now considered the Duc de Chatillon with respect. Somehow, the sight of that nobleman's expansive back stilled his nerves and lent repose to his spirit, which was untimely

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roused to a contemplation of great deeds. The fact that the marshal could sit his mount in apathy while, in the distance, with the admirable precision of aligned chessmen upon their board, the tercios of old Fuentes, who in fifty years had never commanded his men in defeat, issued from Arras and debouched upon the plain stirred him to silent applause. Since Casteljalous's words, delivered in regard to these same tercios on the day of the sortie from Mouzon, Monsieur de Bergerac had been wont to consider their presence upon any battlefield as a guaranty of victory, and he was reinforced in spirit by this non-chalance.

De Guiche, however, commanding the cavalry posted to the right and a little to the rear of the marshal, was far from being so calm. He was, in fact, distraught with the consideration of the action about to be developed, and sat biting his gloves and sweating like a stage-struck boy. When Meilleraye, on a flank, delivered his cavalry charge and led his squadrons roaring down the slight slope upon which he had formed his army, De Guiche spurred his horse nearer to his commanding officer and interrupted what seemed to be that soldier's slumbers. "Monsieur," he said, "Monsieur, it will be necessary to lead my cavalry in support of Monsieur de la Meilleraye."

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Chatillon observed sleepily, "Monsieur, it is our duty to hold these lines of defense and not to quit them prematurely to engage in a general action."

De Guiche fretted. His expression, in any case petulant, resembled that of a bad-tempered baby.

"Monsieur, an army attacking is well known to gain an advantage over an army attacked."

The marshal, frankly and without raising a palm in deference to good manners, yawned.

"And suppose that you are beaten! What then becomes of these works? Do we depend then entirely upon infantry? No, no, Monsieur de Grammont, the time for an attack is not yet."

De Guiche's nerves betrayed him suddenly in a melancholy fashion. Tears appeared in his eyes, and he stuttered in annoyance.

"Ah, monsieur, it is jealousy——"

"Bah!"

"Yes, jealousy that impels you to refuse me permission to charge. It is unworthy of you, monsieur, and you meditate a mischief to my credit. I will complain of you to the King."

Chatillon said cordially, "Do so, monsieur. I beg you to do so. And be so good as to warn me so that I may be present to hear you. But in the meantime, Monsieur de Grammont, attend to me closely. Do you return at once to your post and

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do not venture again to leave it until I give an order. Go at once, monsieur."

De Guiche ground his teeth. He resumed his post with unnecessary rowellings of his horse, biting his gauntlets more savagely than ever and filled with rage against the marshal. De Guiche, like Meilleraye and Brézé, was related to His Eminence and so considered himself a person of the first importance. Chatillon continued to wait. Now and then he dispatched a messenger or ordered a regiment of infantry to move down the slope to the assistance of Meilleraye, whose forces were not sweeping all before them, but he remained unmoved in his intention to hold his cavalry and the body of his forces in reserve. Monsieur de Bergerac became himself concerned. Perhaps the King would become bored and retire from the spectacle before he might gladden the Royal eye with some soul-shaking exploit. He envied the Baron de Neuville, who led a squadron in the army of Meilleraye and was therefore gloriously embellishing a reputation already valorous.

Suddenly, however, a terrific explosion almost shattered his eardrums. He tottered and was alone in a cloud of smoke. He could see nothing and felt blood upon his face. He believed himself dying and was astonished that when he called,

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"*À moi!*" it was in a voice quite normally loud. The smoke cleared, and Monsieur de Cuigy said to him, "That was our artillery. My poor friend, the concussion has made your nose to bleed."

Monsieur de Chatillon at this moment deemed the time ripe for his effort. He lifted his sword and said casually, "Now, gentlemen, is the time." At the same instant he practised the rowels of his spurs, and his mount made a prodigious effort and broke into a gallop. He led the cavalry in a steaming wedge of maddened horses down upon the head of the Spanish infantry. The foot followed, but too closely, and became distractingly involved in the backwash of De Guiche's attack, which rolled back like a wave from a breakwater, after the shock of contact. The foot therefore opened and, leaping between riderless or unmanageable horses, came to push of pike. The Spanish fell back, but in order, clearing their passage with a rhythmic chorus of "*Todo, ha! ha! derecho!*" and pushing their wounded out of ranks to leave their going unimpeded. Their officers, however, each with an armed lacquey to sustain him, fought out of ranks to cover their retreat and all along their front opposed, in single combat or in *mêlée*, the French, who eventually overwhelmed them. Such fighting was an old story to Monsieur de Bergerac. Having dropped his

pike, he felt himself invincible and for a time, indeed, found no match for his impetuous style of fence. He attacked three Spanish gentlemen who fought in concert, bravely, but as though in a carnival, for they made no attempt to separate and poignard him at leisure, preferring to stamp, thrust, and parry points to point. He killed one and wounded his companions, and they surrendered, then helped each other, swords at their sides, toward the French intrenchments. Seeking more enemies to confound, he then perceived a tall captain backed by a lacquey armed at all points and carrying his master's cane as though he were at court. The captain wore a sash of Isabelle, and his orders glittered at his neck on a ribbon of watered silk. Over his poignard arm he wore his cloak like a targe, and when he fought, his lacquey stood ready to aid him or to administer, with a villainous Catalonian dagger, the *coup-de-grâce* to those he wounded. He seemed to take no prisoners, and so far had been victorious, for he fell back with the platoons and did not linger far from their support. Monsieur de Bergerac, however, delayed him by tottering suddenly like a man severely wounded, and his deceit was effective. He saw the Isabelle sash come toward him and the dagger glitter in the hands of the lacquey. Then he straightened and lunged

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in extended play so that his point pierced the captain and flickered for an instant, dully, beyond his shoulders. The Spaniard fell upon his knees and leaned briefly forward, as if to bite the steel, but he was dead, and unwarily Monsieur de Bergerac bent to secure the discoloured silk upon which were strung the orders.

He had forgotten the lacquey.

He heard a sound as of a wolf howling, and the fellow leaped as though to embrace him. His poignard struck and seemed to be shattered against Monsieur de Bergerac's gorget. He fell back and leaped again and was spitted on the Frenchman's rapier, for providentially that one had now thought to clear his point. So he died across his master and Monsieur de Bergerac stooped again for the orders. And then, like Sisera, suddenly, at the feet of the men he had just dispatched, Monsieur de Bergerac bowed and lay down. And where he bowed, there he fell down, to all appearances as dead as those other two. He was never to come to fortune by the wars nor to draw upon himself the profitable approbation of the King. After all, he was not to achieve the bâton and the government of provinces. He had no luck. For the Catalonian dagger had, in spite of neckpiece, cleft his throat.

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Chapter viii

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ARRAS had long been taken and its investiture by French troops fittingly celebrated at the Cardinal-Duke's ball when Monsieur de Bergerac got again upon his legs. Carried from the field of his only pitched battle, he had lain in delirium for weeks, ignorant of the assaults before which the city, finally, had fallen, and of the tragedy that had forever removed from his existence a friend and influential protector. For upon the same day that had seen his own discomfiture, Christophe de Champagne, the Baron de Neuville, had been killed by a musket ball as he led his troop in the charge of Meilleraye's

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cavalry. Monsieur de Bergerac, when sound enough to travel, had returned to Paris and completed his weary convalescence in the Hôtel de Neuville, but he took no joy thereby, for the once radiant Madeleine was become incredibly changed, a widow whose bereavement seemed magnified threefold by the consciousness of former gallantries and frivolities. Daily a priest thundered in her closet, and daily the poor lady beat her breast and acknowledged herself a thing of leprous sinnings. She came to kneel for hours at her prie-dieu, and only visited her emaciated and pallid cousin in order that she might convert him from a worldly life and gain grace by reciting for his edification the abominations of her own scarlet past.

After a little time these palinodes became intolerable to Monsieur de Bergerac. He heard nothing of Madame de Neuville's past life that might not be forgotten by the Almighty after but one hour in the confessional, and he suspected that her spiritual father was preparing the good lady for an existence which, at its close, would be worth a fortune to the Carmelites. He refused to see this father, and when he could totter, removed from the odour of what he believed to be a somewhat scheming sanctity and resumed life in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier. He wished to

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be alone, for he was faced with a problem which might no longer be avoided, or solved by an intellectual casuistry which had ceased even partially to convince himself. Undoubtedly the time had come when he must follow the career for which he was actually fitted and cease to play a part which had gained him two wounds and, save for a half-dozen friends, no manner of advancement. It was become obvious to Monsieur de Bergerac that a successful progress in the military might never be his. Definitely, he was unlucky in war and, since he had chosen to meddle in war only to achieve his fortune, he would hazard so doing no longer. This decided upon, what then would he do? He had sufficient money to enable him to live for a year, perhaps two, if he spent it thoughtfully and did not gamble it away. He had, in a fortnight's time in Flanders, won large sums from Chatillon, and his wound had prevented him from giving that marshal his revenge. With these pistoles he would be independent of Madame de Neuville, whose litanies of woe he now feared worse than starvation, and also of Monsieur de Mauvières, whose house he had not entered for a year and a half. After meditation it seemed to him that, since he was still in his twenty-third year, he might quite as well resume where he had left off five years be-

fore and prosecute the studies once so villainously scanted by Grangier; as to further postpone equipping himself for a life of scholarship by thinking on the time he had lost.

After a week's judgment of this he went every day to a different college in the University quarter and offered his services as usher, assistant master, reader, or what they would, to the authorities he encountered. After a dozen refusals he came in time to the College of Lisieux and secured a post as usher, which paid him a small salary but which allowed him endless opportunities for reading, and which permitted his identification with scholastic interests and so prohibited in his mind occasional desires to return to a career of arms. In the winter of 1641 he was congratulating himself upon a final victory over all restlessness of spirit and a peaceful acceptance of his true rôle in life and was contented. He read much, fulfilled his negligible duties with punctuality, drank no wine and saw no wenches. Since he frequented only one cabaret, that of the Croix de Lorraine, where his degree of fence was known and respected, none speculated upon his nose, and for months at a time his rapier was never quit of its sheath, and a stroll behind the great abbey of Saint-Germain was become as rare for him as debauch. In brief, Savinien de Cyrano,

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Sieur de Bergerac, was a much changed young man and was in a fair way to become buried in routine, when a diversion at his cabaret, occurring one night so close to him as to interfere with his frugal supper, restored to him not only that habit of comportment which had built for him a reputation in the armies, but signally furthered his interests as a learned man of peace.

Dipping his nose over his soup bowl upon this occasion, he was suddenly startled by a loud cry from a neighbour, a charming boy apparently still in his teens, who had not much attracted Monsieur de Bergerac's attention, though a glance had prompted him to compare the youth with the cupids conceived a few years before by Rubens for his canvases commanded by the Queen-dowager. Looking swiftly up, Monsieur de Bergerac perceived that this boy, his blond curls in disarray and his blue eyes and pink cheeks altered by the violence of his efforts, was struggling with a heavy man in leather who seemed resolute to stuff six inches of steel down his gullet. Monsieur de Bergerac arose. This unseemly disorder did mischief to his scholarly repose of mind, and besides, the struggle seemed to be an unequal one. He came upon him clad in leather and from behind took a secure hold on his collar. "Finish, you!" he said and pulled the

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fellow off. Instantly he found himself involved in a scene. Screaming a horrid blasphemy, the man in leather thrust at Monsieur de Bergerac with his poignard and promised to have his bowels out and his heart too, providing that he had one. Monsieur de Bergerac leaped back and drew, and his opponent, at the spectacle of his extensive blade, became a little more sober in his speech. "Ha," he howled, "you wear a sword?"

"If you recognize one," replied Monsieur de Bergerac, reverting to his swashbuckling manner and completely forgetting that he was now an usher in the College of Lisieux, "which I doubt, since your handling of a knife leads me to suspect that you are a butcher."

The other screeched like one in torment.

"A butcher! Why, you grovelling and filthy urchin, you, you itching unmentionable, you scullion's bastard, do you know who I am?"

Monsieur de Bergerac, at these shocking expletives, paled, but with fury. He dropped his point and approached the man in leather, whose rage now seemed so agonizing that foam appeared to bubble upon his lips. Then he reached a hand and buffeted him loudly upon a cheek, and so heavily that the fellow tottered. At once tap boys and customers drew away, leaving both adversaries alone in the middle of a circle, and

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as quickly, the man in leather, with a last scream of fury, put sword in hand, beat his heel upon the floor and attacked like something shot from a gun. His charge, protected by thirty thrusts to the minute, forced Monsieur de Bergerac to break ground between benches and tables and finally to place one of these furnitures between him and his enemy, who leaped instantly upon it and with an appalling lunge had almost pinned him to the wall. Monsieur de Bergerac shuddered.

"Peste!" he declared with perfect candour to himself, "that botte would have cracked me like a filbert." He parried its fellow, sweating, backed from the table, and as the man leaped down from it, riposted with a thrust to the thigh. To his concern his point bent where it should have penetrated and the man bounded backward unharmed.

"Steel!" thought Monsieur de Bergerac. "Doubtless he carries it from knee to craw. Good, I must work now, or it will not be I who walk home."

He fenced carefully, saving his breath, hoping for an opportunity at the face and enraged that he should have deserted his scholarly reserve for such an engagement. The man in leather, in the meantime, seemed to be inexhaustible. He was

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always attacking, crouching, extending, bouncing upon his toes. But he was overconfident. Twice lunging *en tierce*, he was careless of ripostes, and the third time Monsieur de Bergerac called on God beneath his breath and buried his point beneath his opponent's eye. Blinded, this one called in his turn upon God, but not beneath his breath. He dropped his rapier, clapped hands to face, and tottered forward. Monsieur de Bergerac caught him as he stumbled and conducted him to a chair. "You yield yourself?"

"Yield myself? Monsieur, I am a dead man."

A barber arrived, and the wound was dressed. The tap boys led the man away, since he lodged at the Croix de Lorraine, and Monsieur de Bergerac called without shame for wine. Drinking, he found himself to be more of a personage than ever before. For months he had entered the cabaret but to eat, read as he did so, and depart, and his reputation had somewhat lost its lustre. People had not run foul of him, it is true, but he had ceased to impel tongues to anecdotes or cause hats to be doffed. But now, he was restored to the attention of the faubourg, and the house was overflowing with swordsmen who had heard the news.

"Monsieur," declared one gallant to him, "this gentleman whom you have wounded is one of the



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three most notorious duellists in the Île de France."

"Can this be so?"

"It is I who tell you, monsieur. He is a gentleman of the French Vexin, a Fontenay whose reputation is so well known in Paris that he is called Fontenay Coup-d'Épé."

"Ah," murmured Monsieur de Bergerac, "I have been much abroad since '39. I have had but little opportunity to follow these rufflers. Tell me, monsieur, has he then killed so many men?"

"Thirty, at least."

"*Dame!* A very Samson. And I have killed but a bare four or five. But then I do not wear steel beneath my *juste-au-corps* or, for that matter, beneath my breeches. I am, after all, but a private gentleman, though I have had the honour to ride with Monsieur de Carbon de Casteljaloux and to serve also with Monseigneur, the Prince de Conti——"

"Monsieur, you are known," replied the company with flattering courtesy, and Monsieur de Bergerac forgot even further his connection with Lisieux. He drank more wine and remembered suddenly what had been the cause of all this to-do. He looked about him and saw, sitting humbly at a distance, the boy who had been eating Fontenay's poignard when saved therefrom

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by his own knightly intervention. He beckoned, and the boy approached, blushing in appropriate embarrassment.

Monsieur de Bergerac tapped him upon a cheek. "My child, what is your story? What had you said to this fellow that he wished to put an end to you? Speak up!" He leaned back, feeling vaguely that he resembled the great Alexander.

The boy blushed still more deeply. He seemed abashed. "Monsieur, my name is Chapelle. I am son to Luillier, and at present I am enjoying my freedom until Monsieur my father chooses to send me to study with Master Pierre Gassendi, the great philosopher. To-night, being tipsy, I observed more to myself than to anyone else that this Monsieur de Fontenay was a tablefellow with whom, ordinarily, I should not choose to sit. He ate filthily, spewing fish bones until the air seemed darkened with them, and until I was unwise enough to tell him frankly that while a fish bone more or less would not stick in his throat until he choked, their distribution about the table where I was making my dinner stuck most abominably in mine and, actually, did choke me. At which Monsieur de Fontenay observed that he would mend my choking by clearing my throat for me and at once attempted to force his poignard where it could do nothing but harm. For

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the rest, monsieur, you have saved my life, and I willingly place mine at your service. I admit with humiliation that I consciously offended Monsieur de Fontenay and so caused you trouble. It will be my pleasure to recompense you for it in any way you will honour me by selecting."

Monsieur de Bergerac was touched by this speech. He looked upon the boy with increased kindness and invited him to be seated. Then, suddenly, he knit his brows. Something this young Chapelle had said banished sword play from his mind and revived in him his ambition to be sage. "Gassendi!" he said. "You know Gassendi?"

"I have that honour."

"My child, if you would do me a service, make me known, then, to this Gassendi."

Chapelle seemed troubled. "He sees few people, monsieur—my father, who has placed at his disposal a house at Saint-Denis, myself, a pupil or two, Poquelin, Linières . . . He never goes abroad, monsieur, a deer could not be more shy." He was confused. He felt that these were churlish words to address to a man who had saved his life at the peril of his own, and moreover he saw that his saviour felt quite as he did.

Monsieur de Bergerac was, in fact, much put out. He was embarrassed, furious that he had

made this request, furious that it had not at once been granted, furious that his condition in the world was not sufficiently high to allow such a request to reflect honour on him to whom it was put. He damned this pink boy to himself and bit a finger. Then he frowned and waved a hand.

"It was a whim, forget that it was expressed. Besides, how would I have the time to wait upon these pedants?"

He drank his wine and resolutely looked away from his companion. Chapelle was in agony.

"Monsieur!" he said. He received no answer. "Monsieur!"

Monsieur de Bergerac mimed amazement. He lifted an eyebrow. "Ah, pardon, my child, I thought you gone."

Chapelle's face was a spectacle for the pitiful, but he persevered. "I wished to say, monsieur, that if you would do me the honour to come to Saint-Denis in a month's time, the master will be there and will, of course, be flattered by your attendance. I thought, monsieur, for a moment, that you jested. You see, you do not seem to be one who is sympathetic to—to letters, monsieur. You are a swordsman—that is, you appear to be interested in swords——" He was floundering and was grown more rubid than the wine upon the table.

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Monsieur de Bergerac looked upon him with astonishment. "*Mordieu!*" he reflected, "this infant's face is a veritable opal, now milky, now flaming. Nevertheless, I find him amiable." He said aloud, "My child, my appearance is that of a soldier as I have been a soldier. But I am above all things desirous of the company and conversation of reflective men. I intend shortly to write books, and I wish to be known to others who have already done so. Therefore I accept your invitation and I shall wait upon you at a time to be appointed."

Chapelle became instantly radiant. "Monsieur, I have many friends who write books, and I have the honour of being known to several great and illuminating minds. If the idea pleases you, I will bring them here one day so that you may talk with them."

"My child, fix upon a time. Your idea delights me." And Monsieur de Bergerac noted a day upon a leaf in a volume of Propertius and presently went home, in much the state of mind in which he had found himself on the night, a year before, of his election to Conti's foot. He was, however, grown more cautious in his estimate of what fortune awaited him than he had been when dedicated to a career of arms. He was, he recognized, distinctly a man of auspicious commence-

ments, but since neither of his two previous ventures had fulfilled their promises he refused to deposit his hopes to the credit of this latest one.

On the day agreed upon between himself and Chapelle he went to the Croix de Lorraine in a temper perfectly expectant but not rashly confident, though when he met the company assembled he allowed himself a vast amount of private exhilaration. Chapelle, like any enthusiastic boy, had prevailed upon his father to invite every friend that might be reached, and since Luillier numbered among his intimates not only serious scholars such as were Gassendi, Peiresc, Naudé, Patin, and La Mothe Le Vayer, but also the more prominent of the libertins, Saint-Amant, D'Assoucy, Tristan l'Hermite, Sarrasin, and others, Monsieur de Bergerac found himself in the presence of nearly every well-known man of erudition or of letters in Paris. Gassendi, of course, was absent, as was Peiresc, lecturing in Toulouse, but Patin and Le Vayer argued singular cures of maladies, discussed the mastoid of Francis II, the surgery of Paré, and the Cardinal-Duke's cancer in terms that so entranced him that he forgot the philosophers. Saint-Amant, the pothouse poet, incontestable chief of a notable collection of wine-bibbing writers, cornered him early and deposed

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between cups that in life there were but six activities worthy of man's attention.

"Monsieur," bubbled the monstrous Norman, balancing his three hundred pounds of flesh upon a chair designed for normal burdens, "mark me in this and, since you are young, profit by my advice. Go daily to a cabaret, monsieur, sleep nightly with a pleasant girl, monsieur, guzzle wine at both times and eat a good cheese in volume. Enjoin your friends at least once a fortnight to join you in a feast, something as nearly orgiastic as your means allow, and allow it to continue for three days. Live such a life as this and you will prosper. And you will write, my friend, sacred God, how you will write." He perceived that the tavern wench had brought more wine and rolled swiftly away to secure it. He pinched the girl's thigh, and she fled the room blowsily, squeaking with assumed shyness.

Saint-Amant, who had been at sea with a duke for a companion, and in Poland, with a queen for patron, leered. "Good supper, good bed," he carolled in an outrageous falsetto, then managed to mention in one breath D'Harcourt and Maria Gonzaga, his two illustrious protectors. Suddenly he yelped. Boisrobert, Richelieu's jester, had stepped upon his toes. "Are you multiple-legged?" asked the humorist courteously. "And

you, plague strike you, does cossetting a cardinal permit you to maim gentle people?" objected the anguished poet, and with the sheer size of his belly thrust Boisrobert from him as he might the tapestry before a door. He limped away, and the Cardinal-Duke's man smiled at Monsieur de Bergerac, who was astounded at this byplay. He had never before seen the distinguished singer of the Rue de Seine, and literary folk were new to him.

"Is he always thus?" he asked in some embarrassment.

Boisrobert whistled, "*Ah, dive bouteille, il n'y a que toi,*" and tapped his nose. "You are ingenuous," he said, "the poet is very rarely thus. Why, my poor friend, he is sober." He went away to greet Tristran l'Hermite, and Chapelle appeared with a boy of roughly his own age, eighteen or thereabouts, whom he introduced as Bachaumont. Monsieur de Bergerac was relieved. Chapelle and Bachaumont, at least, were not dissipated sensualists of Saint-Amant's persuasion. He thought gratefully of the worthy fathers of these two lads, who had brought up their sons to engage in other interests than debauch. He chatted with Bachaumont, whose manners were exquisitely deferential, and asked him something of the history of his friend. He was, Bachaumont

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declared, honoured to inform him. "Chapelle," he said, "is Luillier's bastard and was, so he tells me, born in the Faubourg de la Chapelle. So his father gave him the name that naturally occurred to him, the one he bears. He is brilliant. He is carefully educated by his father, who has asked Gassendi to minister to his mind while he himself ministers to his body. Monsieur Luillier, as I understand it, esteems pleasure. He personally supervised his son's initiation into manhood, and Chapelle informs me that his father afterward paid the wench enough to allow her to retire." He smiled with charming candour at Monsieur de Bergerac, who tottered upon his feet.

"Is he then vicious, this infant?" he said. Bachaumont observed gravely, "It is Monsieur Luillier who is vicious. Did you know, monsieur, that the house where Gassendi will lodge is in actuality Luillier's private bordello?" The elder man, in his perplexity, amused the boy, who laughed. This laugh enraged Monsieur de Bergerac. "Bah!" he exclaimed. "Such turpitude revolts me. This Luillier is a lecherous scoundrel——"

"Not so loud, monsieur, he stands not far distant, and besides, he holds a post in the government of the King. He is a charming man, intel-

lectual and full of taste. Only he has his *mignon péché*."

"That is very well, but he will expiate it, this *mignon péché*. God will arrange things for Monsieur Luillier——"

This time the boy Bachaumont's laughter was frankly derisive.

"God?" he repeated, and wriggled with mirth.

"Yes, God, puppy. You have, I assume, heard of God, and of Christ His Son?"

"If it please you——?"

Monsieur de Bergerac with difficulty restrained himself from beating this frightful little creature of impiety about the head. "Christ, I assume again that you know, is the Son of God—and is God——"

Bachaumont looked incredulous.

"Do you believe that Christ is God?" thundered Monsieur de Bergerac with such ferocity of expression that the boy flinched.

"Monsieur, to be frank with you, He is not yet. But He will be when the old One dies." And before the hand of him so answered might fall upon him he skipped off and was lost in the crowd of Luillier's friends.

De Bergerac, trembling with rage and amazement, did not seek to pursue him. The notable sacrilege enunciated in this stripling's words had,

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sincerely, horrified him. Though he was, himself, unbroken to the saddle and bridle of the Church, he preserved a faith, inculcated in childhood, in the Founder of Christianity, and it shockingly amazed him that any human might with impunity defy the God of his belief. From his reading, achieved between times at Lisieux, he had grown intellectually sympathetic to the written skepticisms of Théophile de Viau, first recognized leader of the Libertins, and to the philosophic meditations of Jules César de Vanini, the priest whose tongue was torn from his mouth at Toulouse and of whose martyrdom in fire the Jesuits made mock because the man had bellowed in agony when the pincers had stripped his palate. Monsieur de Bergerac was, in so far as Catholic doctrine affected his being, mildly heretical, but never had he pursued his intellectual probings to a degree that seemed conclusively inimical to orthodox convictions. The example of his cousin, Madeleine de Neuville, had, it is true, increased in his consciousness a distrust of monastic orders and impressed upon his mind a sense of an eagerness in frocked clerics to profit by the credulous repentance of wealthy communicants; but that a whole society in town, in Paris which was the hub of Christian Europe, should definitely deny that God the Father was God the

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Father and that Jesus Christ His Son was, not only a participant in a Triune Deity but, in His own Person, God, was unthinkable. And that such a society should be composed of beardless boys like Chapelle and Bachaumont seemed monstrously to indicate that this heterodox prurience was active in the very cradles of France.

Standing alone in an eddy of guests, bidden, he was unable to forget, to meet him, Monsieur de Bergerac pondered on this and yielded somewhat to a juvenescent eclecticism. It was, undoubtedly, an easy thing to do, to deny the Deity while youth and alcohol impelled in one's veins a torrential ebullience, and Death, after all, was a contingency with which no man in youth expected to come to grips and so determined no manner of authority. Théophile de Viau, it was a consolation to recall, had died impenitent, cursing with his last breath Father Garasse, the Jesuit who had earnestly sought to send him in the wake of the tragic Vanini, and Viau, to Monsieur de Bergerac, exemplified the majesty of untrammelled thought. If Viau had possessed the courage to pass into the unknown void, the silence, the abyss from which none had ever returned, neither prince nor paladin, potentate nor poet, without recantation or apostasy, then surely Savinien de Cyrano might do likewise. Death,

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in fact, escorted one into good company, and if Théophile were in hell, then heaven might very well be a dull abode, rendered the more tedious by the devoted altercations of the Fathers. Grangier of Beauvais, after all, had quoted Chrysostom, and if God tolerated on such tongues the syllables of the Elect, then the fellowship of Paradise could be no great matter. Thus, though after Bachaumont's elusion he was left alone, Monsieur de Bergerac became consolate. The gross gambollings of Saint-Amant who, in a corner, was exchanging feculencies with Sarrasin, came suddenly to lose their effects hitherto so conducive to nausea, and when he beheld Chappelle and Bachaumont conferring together, casting, as they did so, furtive glances in his direction, he beckoned to them and smiled.

He drank a goblet of a wine kept fast in cellarage for thirty years in Angers, and almost unknown to himself was become, formally, a Libertin, one of a company of free-thinking and free-living gentry who, in their day, constituted the gravest menace to Seventeenth Century Catholic Europe with which any papal authority had ever to deal.

Afterward, Monsieur de Bergerac might, on more sober reflection, conclude that his new-found conviction had found its genesis while still

he was a boy, self-conscious, introspective, and eager for instruction, at the College of Beauvais. Giordano Bruno, Vanini, and Théophile had each one of them, exercised over his intelligence an influence and an authority not lacking in lasting effects, and though, during his sojourn with the armies, he had sublimated the intellectual impulses conceived by these men, he had not effectually dismissed them from his consciousness. For years, he now recognized, he had been intrinsically a Libertin, a man who must determine for himself the plan of his own salvation, the routine by which he must achieve, if indeed such a thing existed, immortal life. The tepid avowals of his father, Monsieur de Mauvières, of a conviction completely orthodox, had never impressed him. It had become clear to him, while still he had been in his infancy, while still Richelieu had been no more than Bishop of Luçon, that in so far as spiritual guidance was administered, the Church in France was grown decayed and feeble. Jansenius and the foundation of Porte-Royale, the devotion of the Arnaulds and the radius of their influence, had profoundly stirred him when he had been but ten years old and an orthodox preceptor had thrashed him for his sympathy with doctrines which, after Pascal, become definitely odious to the Faith. At no time during his life

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had he been an admirable son of the Church, and his propensity for free thought, smothered during his incumbency of positions in the guards of Casteljaloux and in the infantry regiment of Conti, now, at this stimulus ministered by the boy Bachaumont, waxed and became a positive force in his character. He retained his feeling of disapproval for the impieties of this juvenile, but he ceased to feel that righteous fury which, in the defenders of the one true religion, impels them to destroy traducers.

When he had drunken of more wine he became not so certain that Bachaumont had even been more than casually impious. Had he, after all, he speculated, been impious at all? A little unsteady, now, upon his legs, he judged that the youth might perhaps be well-founded in his skepticism. Luillier, he remembered, had been the cause of the debate, and since now Luillier was being embraced by Corneille and Rotrou, both distinguished dramatists and moralistic authors, Luillier could not be as bad as he had named him to Bachaumont.

With a wavering gesture Monsieur de Bergerac indicated to the serving wench that he lacked wine, and with eyes grown wide and, as he sensed them, a little strained, he searched the crowd for Chapelle. The boy had not heeded his

previous invitation. Doubtless Bachaumont had given a relation of his talk and the effect thereof, and both were frightened of further acquaintance. To himself alone, and foolishly, Monsieur de Bergerac smiled. Of course these children, these flippant springalds, could not know that De Bergerac the duellist, the blood-drenched roisterer, and, in somewhat singular paradox, the believer in fundamental theology, had, in a few minutes' time, become De Bergerac the Libertin, the fellow of Saint-Amant, the convinced and militant disciple of Théophile de Viau.

When the poor chivvied trollop brought him more of the imperious Angevin red he pressed her bosom and hiccoughed a *dortoir* pleasantry in her ear. Suddenly, he sprawled down upon a bench and his innermost thoughts became crystal clear and infinitely interpretable, though his tongue was grown churlish and thick and could not perform its office. He wavered, grinned, slack-lipped and idly, at nothing, and became immensely proud of his identity. A memory of his prowess as a swordsman, of his score of victories upon the field of honour, invaded him and impelled him to rise and to swagger precariously into a group of conversing guests. He was obsessed by a sense of his physical power, his superior qualities as a man of

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brawn, and threw a chest the while he balanced wildly upon his heels. It was intolerable to him that a small creature in dun-coloured silks continued to chatter irrespective of his presence, and though, in that lucid chamber of his brain in which he beheld his own ridiculous actions, he shuddered, he smote this gentleman upon a shoulder. The man turned and glared. "I am De Bergerac," pronounced the interloper.

"I am Voiture, monsieur, and I dislike drunkards. Be off!"

"Monsieur," promised Monsieur de Bergerac very genially, "if you were fifty carriages and each one bearing cannon, I would still cut off your ears." He laughed loudly at his wit and, while he in silks trembled with fury, leaned forward and tweaked the gentleman's nose.

Voiture howled. Luillier, Tristan l'Hermite, and D'Assoucy flung themselves upon Monsieur de Bergerac and implored him not to prosecute the quarrel, while the pet of the Hôtel Rambouillet wept until his tears threatened to discolour his delicate apparel. The little man was extraordinarily vain, and this affront, put upon him by an intoxicated nobody, was to remain painfully memorable. Presently, when Monsieur de Bergerac would be in need of literary allies, Voiture would have his revenge. Now, however,

Monsieur de Bergerac was careless of enmities. He at once forgot Voiture, and while Luillier bade the company sit to table, became fast friends with Tristan and D'Assoucy. He sat between them and laughed so heartily at their every word that they found him wonderfully agreeable and, by degrees, became as confidential with him as though he were their oldest friend. Tristan, no longer sober, talked of the duel in which, at the age of thirteen, he had killed a Garde-du-Corps, told scabrous anecdotes of his life with the Royal bastards of the Marquise de Verneuil, traduced the character, certainly not flawless, of Monsieur, Gaston d'Orléans, to whom he had once been a gentleman-in-ordinary, and recited poems from which, he averred, Corneille had pillaged to impress Academicians. Monsieur de Bergerac found him admirable and gazed at him with eyes grown moist with satisfaction and delight to be in such a great man's company. Tristan's abominable conceit, his pretentious vapourings on the subject of his descent, strangely, from Peter the Hermit and from that Tristan l'Hermite who had contrived villainies for Louis XI, did not repel him. The strong and musky vintage of Anjou forbade in him the office of selective judgment, and he was content.

Charles Coypeau, or D'Assoucy, as he pre-

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ferred to be known, was likewise much to his taste. D'Assoucy frequented the Libertins, but chiefly because these fed him, for he was a gourmand and, like Saint-Amant, entertained for food an affection acutely sensual. He ate with relish ten courses and five meats and kept glancing apprehensively about him to make certain that his fellow guests were not partaking of a dish that had not been served him. He leered at Chapelle, whose master he professed to be, though the boy named him monkey to his friends, and with his mouth full paid him compliments upon his banquet. He told Monsieur de Bergerac tales of the King, whose boyhood he had witnessed in the capacity of a buffoon engaged to amuse the dreary little Prince, and declared that Luynes had been the lover of the Queen-mother. He had the effrontery to insist that he had with his own eyes beheld the Devil in speech with the pathetic Galigai, and heaped fable upon fable the while he stuffed himself incredibly and sighed that manners no longer permitted the use of the peacock's feather to empty one's belly in order once again to fill it. He was revolting, yet because he collaborated with Corneille and was recognized as a poet, and chiefly because of Monsieur de Bergerac's hilarious insobriety, that young man found him entrancing. When the *omelette au*

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lard was borne in and set upon the table, and its appearance marked the time for bawdy talk and the blasphemies with which the Libertins believed they caused the gates of Paradise to totter and be loosened, D'Assoucy was become boon with him and beyond all bearing fulsome.

The atmosphere was now grown very free, and the younger men fell to devising toasts injurious to decency and reciting the more sacrilegious of the poems of Théophile, while Chapelle and Bachaumont, joined by another boy no more than fourteen, a pretty youth named Linières, listened with all their ears. Gui Patin and La Mothe Le Vayer rose and left the company. They were serious men who led ordered lives, and they considered, as did most worthy bourgeois, that the Libertins were a set of vicious idlers and wholly unworthy of esteem. Of Luillier, who had a genius for friendship, they were genuinely fond, though they deplored his morals, and only to oblige him had they come. They sought to salute Monsieur de Bergerac as they departed, but Tristan and D'Assoucy were screaming impieties in his ears, and he had no eyes for his staid and sober elders. So they went away and talked all the way to their homes of the decayed customs of the age.

But the convivial gathering at the Croix de

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Lorraine continued sitting, and the howls that marked its progress grew the louder. Nicolas Faret, the out-at-elbows poet, was now so drunken that he was insensible and his heedless friends rolled him from his chair to the floor and stood over him or upon him as the spirit moved them. Saint-Amant recalled his comrades of previous debauches. Théophile, Bilot, Molière d'Essartine, the Baron de Saint-Brice, Chassaingrimont, Belot, Marigny, Brun, and the rest, and sobbed because some were dead and the others, though present, were too unsober to converse with him. Tristan sang, at first loudly, then with dulled eyes, in a sort of dogged whine until he went to sleep using Faret for a pillow. D'Assoucy wished to fight Du Ryer for praising the poetry of Sarasin and looked for his sword in all places save at his side, until he forgot who it was that he had challenged and went away suddenly, under the impression that his presence was desired at court. Everyone declaimed or slept or did both by turns and the tap boys persevered in their attendance, serving now red wine, now white, now claret, now Burgundy, now the wine of Champagne, in an effort to make everyone completely unconscious and so get to their beds.

Monsieur de Bergerac was the first to follow Patin and La Mothe Le Vayer. He had become

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more sober, and disgust invaded him as Saint-Amant, still blubbering, spun suddenly like a barrel and joined Tristan in collapse upon the prone and shabby figure of Faret. Monsieur de Bergerac had had enough of Chapelle's banquet. He was still Libertin but he had no intention of coupling his intellectual franchise with continued guzzling. He went away, and at the last saw, with unhappy eyes, the still childish and comely faces of the boys Chapelle, Bachaumont, and Linières, observing with infinite amusement the antics of their abandoned elders.

Chapter ix

PHILOSOPHY, FRIENDS, AND FILIAL BLACKMAIL

NEXT day Monsieur de Bergerac lay late abed and was truant from his office at the College of Lisieux. For one thing his head ached, and for another he wished to assemble his ideas and to analyze precisely the emotions, born in the company of the Libertins, that still stirred him. These emotions were various. Gratification to have been so swiftly received as their equal by recognized men of letters like Tristan, D'Assoucy, and Saint-Amant, satisfaction that he had decisively acknowledged himself a free-thinker after the fashion of Théophile, disgust at the debauch in which he had assisted, and

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remorse for having done so, warred all together in his consciousness and did nothing to still the pain in his temples or the slight nausea that troubled his stomach. After immoderation in his use of wine Monsieur de Bergerac had always suffered acute revulsion, and as he grew older he found himself no more apt at debauch than he had been in Mouzon, where he had forced himself to it with privy misgivings. True, he was fond of a good wine, but he was not an able potman. The drink went too quickly to his head, encouraged abuse of it, and left his brain torpid and his self-respect harmfully diminished. He must, he realized, deny himself all further indulgence of this sort, explain to his new friends that drink bred a distemper in him, and so be that apparently unique specimen, an abstaining Libertin. He moaned in agony at the remembrance of his treatment of the little man in the dun-coloured silks, Voiture, of whom all ladies spoke with such tender respect, and found his intention strengthened. This Bacchus was a much overrated deity, and Venus, for that matter, was hardly better. The emphasis which the Libertins placed upon their presidence over life was absurd. Again Monsieur de Bergerac moaned. He was horribly uncomfortable.

He thought gratefully, however, of Chapelle's

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invitation to him to wait upon Gassendi. Minerva, now, symbolized a worthy passion and the only one by him authentically nourished. What was wine or love compared to learning? Monsieur de Bergerac had not, it is true, ever been in love as that condition was understood at the Hôtel Rambouillet, nor had he allowed his habits with women to be directed by the instructions of the Carte du Tendre, but he believed himself well enough versed in gallantry to judge of the importance of desire and the satisfaction thereof, and he held both cheaply. His were not amorous humours. For purposes of vanity or display he could, remembering his tutelage at the hands of Madeleine de Neuville, pay a compliment or contrive a flattering impromptu with the best, but his heart was never in them, and the strictures imposed by Mademoiselle de Scudéry upon the conduct of those seeking the esteem of mistresses he had come to regard as ridiculous.

He had possessed for Madame de Neuville a very real fondness, an affection largely idealized, a devotion in the end perfectly platonic. He had allowed comrades to imagine him the happy lover of a great lady but only since to do so was fashionable, and actually the likeness which he preserved of her upon the medal which

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she had given him meant no more to him than the memory he entertained of his mother, to whom he had been devoted and who now was dead. He was, he recognized clearly, essentially a cold man, and neither sensual nor genuinely romantic. Intellectually, perhaps, he sought romance, and duelling, certainly, he was pleased to favour because it forged a link between the present, which was tolerably drab, and the past about which he delighted to read for the colour woven into it by precepts of chivalry. But even duelling was an activity that he pursued with a sense of effort and not with joy. Unlike Bouteville, Monsieur de Bergerac did not fight for the fun of it.

Besides, in a few months' time he had greatly changed. His disappointments in the matter of a military career had aged him, and neither mentally nor physically was he any longer particularly youthful. Though not yet five-and-twenty he looked upon himself as old and realized that, except for his days of levity as a guardsman and a member of Conti's foot, he had always lacked boyishness and been more than a little inclined to an introspection frequently melancholy. Remembering his authorship of the ballad of "Le Bravo Cyrano," he was appalled that at any time could he have been so candidly juvenile, and, as his head and belly grew no more comfortable, he

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repudiated his roistering self with contempt. He was wise enough to reflect, however, that it had always been thus. When his bodily ease was returned to him he would forget this period of self-scorn and duel again upon any pretext. But, he swore to himself, he would not again become drunken.

In the early afternoon he was sufficiently recovered to be able to leave his bed. He took carriage to the Croix de Lorraine and after dining began to feel himself. He strolled in the Cours la Reine and was gratified because Saint-Évremond pointed him out to the exquisite Ninon, Mademoiselle de l'Enclos, a Libertin since the age of twelve. At that age the child, with precocious wit, had already estimated the position of the Church in France and had been given penance therefor by the Jesuits at the instance of her mother, who had also beaten her with a slipper publicly after Mass at Notre-Dame. Saint-Évremond, who loved her, had long constituted himself her preceptor, and at this time his good judgment was the envy of all Paris. Monsieur de Bergerac assumed that Saint-Amant had already told all his friends of this brilliant young man for whom Chapelle had given a notable banquet, or that Tristan or D'Assoucy had been at work. In reality Saint-Évremond had found his

appearance remarkable and had laughed at him with his pretty pupil, all unknowing of his importance, but the effect upon Monsieur de Bergerac remained none the less pleasant. He also saw Voiture in the company of the tawny-haired and lovely Mademoiselle Paulet, the lioness of the Hôtel Rambouillet. Voiture saw him and shuddered. From D'Assoucy, who wore a sword though he had never used it, he had heard of De Bergerac, the master swordsman, and he was, himself, a coward save with a pen. At Monsieur de Bergerac's salutation he was too supple, and his obeisance was inordinate, at which his lady wondered and De Bergerac was vastly pleased. Voiture, evidently, was not angry with him. He became, after a time, completely restored to self-satisfaction, and when, returning to the cabaret, he found Chapelle, who informed him that Gassendi was come to Saint-Denis, his mercurial spirits were again at a peak. With twilight came Tristan and D'Assoucy to commence the business of the evening and resolve themselves again, and quite as usual, into cellarage for the establishment's wine, but though they pressed him Monsieur de Bergerac held fast to that resolution. He drank but one cup only, pleading his health, and went home sober long before dawn. The conversation of his friends, turning upon

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literature, had entranced him, and when he had listened for three hours while the preposterous Tristan quoted his own works, he was ingenuous enough, and enthusiastic enough, to think the fellow the greatest poet of his day. D'Assoucy, too, had been very fine upon the writing of Tragedy, and the boy Chapelle had been charming with his impromptu couplets and rhymed epistles to them all. In fact, Monsieur de Bergerac felt that at last he had found his level, and dreamed all night of that academy founded by His Eminence for the advancement of French letters.

Next day he secured the hire of his landlord's family jennet and rode to Saint-Denis. His mind was teeming with peaceful thoughts, and his hand, resting upon the pommel of his rapier, was as light upon it as though it were a scholar's hand poised significantly upon a heap of ancient tomes. He had even thought to leave the blade at home and would have done so had not the habit of its presence at his haunch caused in him a sensation of nakedness were it put by. The jennet ambled gently, the air itself, the season, both were gentle, and no one could have approached an atmosphere of erudition in a more delicately sympathetic state of mind than did Monsieur de Cyrano de Bergerac upon this happy morning. Inquiring

the way to Luillier's pleasure manor, even the reflection that this house was in some sort scandalous did no mischief to his mood. To be brief, he felt himself to be compact with unassailable virtue.

He threw the reins of his mount to a lacquey before Luillier's door and strode confidently, yet with humility, into the entresol. Here the maître d'hôtel met him and, somewhat to his surprise, inquired his business. Monsieur de Bergerac said diffidently that he was expected and that no doubt the master was awaiting him impatiently, since the hour was growing late. The maître d'hôtel at this assumed that officious air peculiar to such pestilential busybodies and observed that he had strict orders to admit no one of the gentleman's description and that the master was already lecturing to his pupils, Messieurs Chapelle and Linières and a scrubby youth named Poquelin.

At these words the gentleman almost swooned with bewildered chagrin. He was so stunned by this outrageous news that the maître d'hôtel thought him an innocent of which it would be easy to be rid, and started, most unwisely, to push him toward the door. Whereupon, with a horrible and convulsive movement of his whole body, Monsieur de Bergerac roared like a tiger: "Good, then! So it is for this that I am courteous! That

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I am placid! That I walk quietly in the company of drunken capons! So! I must fight to be learned! I must kill a few of these pothouse emasculates! One may take Paradise by force, *hein?* Good. I will storm Gassendi!" and he buffeted the maître d'hôtel so that the man's head bobbed loosely on his shoulders, and drew his sword forthwith. The maître d'hôtel squealed in terror; lacqueys burst into the entresol and burst immediately out again; somewhere in the house one of Luillier's women wailed on a rising note, and all was clamant disorder and confusion. And the core of this confusion was Monsieur de Bergerac, who continued doggedly to thunder imprecations and to threaten, with steel that swished evilly about him, to massacre anyone who barred his way.

Inevitably, Chapelle made his appearance, his face as pale as a napkin but his eyes bright with fury. Chapelle had, at the last moment, lacked the courage to inform the revered Gassendi of the inclusion of a known duellist in his select and sober class. Gassendi did not profess philosophy for money, and it had been only as a favour to Luillier that he had volunteered to instruct his bastard and a friend or two in the rudiments of his chosen science. To ask such a man to accept an older pupil who had upon his indulgence no

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claim whatever was, there was no doubt of it, presumptuous, and Chapelle had therefore quietly avoided his obligation and trusted to luck that Monsieur de Bergerac was, after all, insincere in his protestations on the subject of knowledge and would not disturb himself to come to Saint-Denis.

Now, however, the boy was in a quandary, and a very sapient reflection informed him that the possible annoyance of Gassendi was preferable to the frantic rage of Monsieur de Bergerac, whom he had seen before in just such an attitude of offense. So he fell straightway upon the maître d'hôtel and berated him for his stupidity, cursed him for his discourtesy to an expected guest, and in all was so plausible that the fellow's scattered wits now took leave of him altogether, so that he actually believed that he had been ordered to admit this horrid swordsman to Gassendi's privacy. After which, the riot stilled, Chapelle met the marvelling Monsieur de Bergerac with fifty prayers for forgiveness for employing such dolts as were his servants, explained that they had served his father for years and were grown intolerably officious, and so well employed his charm that Monsieur de Bergerac smothered a skeptical impulse to look further than the boy's words, and allowed himself to be led with cir-

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cumstance into the salon where Gassendi held his little symposium.

There, round-eyed and breathless, he found the distinguished philosopher in a condition of no little alarm, and the boy Linières with Poquelin, assuring him that all was well. Poquelin, only three years younger than was Monsieur de Bergerac himself, was delicate-appearing, Jesuitical in manner, and seemed melancholy. He was pleased that another, one nearer his own age, had joined the class, for he was earnest, and he deprecated the effect upon Gassendi of the two boys' somewhat flippant precocities. Linières and Chapelle, impressed in any case by an aspect of life unknown to them as sons of men of the robe, an aspect of physical excellence admirable to boys of any age, made room for him with punctilio, and Gassendi, his nerves restored to quietude, saluted him vaguely but kindly and, it is possible, believed him merely another of Luillier's by-blows. So matters were resolved, and while Monsieur de Bergerac listened with ears that missed no syllable of the master's, Gassendi commenced where he had left off at the interruption, and in his gentle voice, a little fuzzy with hoarseness, resumed the expositions of his beliefs.

Pierre Gassend, as he signed himself, was in

his fifty-first year and at the summit of his fame as a scholar and a philosopher. He was of Provence, in appearance ascetical yet virile, with an intellect that from practical affairs was often absent but was always directed upon matters of the spirit and the mind. Like Descartes, however, he prosecuted, intellectually, two careers, one of which was controlled by the orthodox requirements of his position as a priest of the Church, the other, in which he reasoned as he wished, ratiocinated independently of doctrine or dogma, and evolved a philosophy relatively Epicurean which never infringed upon the practice of his profession. In a day when many priests led reproachable lives, when there was much abuse of privilege, much toleration of scandalous procedure, venality, personal unchastity, and undignified deportment, Gassendi pursued an excellent career, said his masses upon Sundays and feast days, drank no wine nor ate of meat, and when he died, did so because he had too strictly observed the Lenten season. His integrity, the absolute probity of his life, and the seductive qualities of his philosophic thought made him the most esteemed scholar of his generation, and it was always said of him that he was the most philosophic of the scholars and the most scholarly of the philosophers. He was, without con-

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veying an impression of incongruous achievements, at once a Christian and an Epicurean, though his philosophy he unhesitatingly submitted to the inspection of the Church and in the uttermost analysis of his beliefs recognized the authority of the dogmas over his otherwise untrammelled speculations.

His Epicureanism, which became the immutable foundation of Monsieur de Bergerac's own philosophic professions, was moderate and in its reasoning comparable to that of the founder of this school. He beheld in the universe a concrete reality, atomic in construction, solid and resistant, and in infinity a word incapable of comprehension employed to designate something no less incomprehensible. The individual, he deposed, is likewise composed of atoms and is endowed with imagination and sensibility and a soul which is as actual an organic unit as the brain or lungs or heart. Where this soul is placed remained mysterious to Monsieur de Bergerac, but that it exists and is created of familiar elements Gassendi made positive declaration. The development of the individual thus equipped depends upon experience, and lacking this the spirit, capable of instruction, continues to lie fallow. Everything which may be conceived of in the human understanding is vested originally in the

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senses and only achieves conscious recognition when these senses have, by experience, been awakened to their functions. Monsieur de Bergerac, who had looked into Aristotle, heard this postulation with a wise nod of the head, but Poquelin, who had been to school to the Jesuits, appeared startled. Gassendi, however, observed neither young man. He was withdrawn into the timeless regions of speculative thought. He submitted that life and the evolution of the universe are administered by a Sovereign Intelligence which instils into them order and harmony. The soul, he ruminated, sensitized yet still material, gives birth to feeling and to thought and so functions according to the plan of the Sovereign Intelligence, and the mind, supported by the experiences of the senses, is capable of development in ratio to the significance of these experiences and so may, in some cases, attain to an excellence not necessarily incomparable to that of God.

At this Poquelin said timidly, "Master, this is, of course, conjectural."

Gassendi returned from the claustral solitude of his meditation. Unthinking, he betrayed that skepticism which caused the Libertins to boast of his agreement with their intellectual persuasions.

"My child," he said, "everything is conjec-

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tural, in a greater or less degree. While I know much that may be said upon certain subjects, there are others upon which I cannot speak at all, so that I were a fool to boast omniscience. I but make use of a philosophic liberty of reflection, and in doing so I abstain from conclusions as I abstain from heresies."

Privately, both Monsieur de Bergerac and Poquelin were of the opinion that had he been a less illustrious philosopher he might, for his Cartesian denials of assurance in these things, have been suspect long ago in the minds of theologians, but so rigidly had he always confined his faith and his philosophy to different intellectual spheres that, actually, the Jesuits protected him and, but for Anne of Austria's opposition, would have preferred him to Péréfixe as tutor to the future Louis XIV. Monsieur de Bergerac, already a self-acknowledged Libertin, found Gassendi's discourse completely convincing and had now good reasons for his free-thinking, and from the lips of genius. When he returned to Paris he accompanied Poquelin, who was no less profoundly stirred than was he, though Poquelin was a little fearful at the mischief wrought by philosophy to the neat edifice of dogmatic reasoning that, in his mind, had been erected by the Fathers. He was a good talker, this somewhat

frail young man, and he accompanied his arguments with birdlike and brilliant glances from his noticeable eyes, so that Monsieur de Bergerac was conscious of scrutiny and replied with dignity and after thought. But of Poquelin he became instantly fond, and he intended to frequent him. He found that, in some paradox to the obviously sober calibre of his mind, Poquelin enjoyed debauch, provided it was not too violent, but that genuine ill health compelled him to observe the strictest moderation. He looked on and was diverted in cabarets and often lamented the feebleness of a constitution that would brook no physical exuberance. But he wished to live and so was never careless. When he parted with Monsieur de Bergerac it was with the understanding that they should always go together to attend Gassendi, and both were gratified to think of this companionship.

Having thus determined upon constant attendance at Saint-Denis, Monsieur de Bergerac proceeded to make an end of his connection with the College of Lisieux. He was able to do so without any difficulty whatever, because of late his appearances in the University Quarter had been infrequent and his duties irregularly discharged. The college authorities, in fact, were a little chagrined because they had been forestalled by

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the resignation of an usher whose expulsion they had anticipated announcing to him, and Monsieur de Bergerac was correspondingly gratified.

He collected the small sum due to him and pitied his late scholars who, unlike himself, were forced to listen five times a day to pedants who had scarce even heard of the great Gassendi. His determination, however, to be free to frequent the Gassendists bore with it one uneasy necessity. In order to supplement his funds which, though he added to them now and again by shrewd play at lansquenet, were dwindling, he must resume relations with Monsieur de Mauvières, in whose house he had not set foot since the spring of '39. Monsieur de Bergerac conceived that he had become a sufficiently considerable figure in a particular section of Parisian society to overbear his father's ignoble parsimony and force him to give to the cadet of his sons the allowance that was due to him, not to speak of the arrears. This time, he promised himself, he would remain planted on the paternal hearth until he had his just dues, but at the remembrance of his promise to return a marshal of France to the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, he was, there was no denying, embarrassed.

Nevertheless, prudently without warning

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Monsieur de Mauvières, he did return to the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, stopping for a minute in the Place Maubert to allow a barber to arrange the hair upon his face and head in a manner to impress his father with his well-being. Upon reaching the parental door he knocked with decorum, and when it was opened swiftly intervened a foot between it and the jamb. He found himself staring eye to eye with his father's *bonne*, a big-framed Norman woman named Elizabeth Descourtieux who had entered the service of the Cyrano ten years before. Savinien had never liked her. Since his mother's death she had been intrusted with the keys of the household and had grown officious. She had rough hair the colour of sand, coarse red cheeks, hazel eyes flecked with yellow, a big bosom and a tyrannous temper. Now, without a greeting, she strove to close the door and glared like a tomcat. Savinien opposed his strength to her. "Ah, Zabeth, little one," he said furiously, "so this is your welcome. Desist, monster, or I beat you. Good, take this!" He hurled himself against the door, which gave way and carried him with a thud upon the bosom of the Descourtieux, who in turn sat down upon the flooring. Monsieur de Bergerac, preparing to cuff her, was suddenly astonished. He looked at the *bonne* in genuine amazement. The

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woman was tricked out in finery which, certainly, he had seen before. He examined it. "Here, here," he muttered, "my mother's Spanish lace. And her plum-coloured satin. And her ribbons. A thief, *hein?* Get up!" Outraged, he lifted the woman, now strangling with passion, to her feet and, thrusting her before him, entered his father's salon.

At his desk, more shrunken and sloven than ever, Monsieur de Mauvières inspected him with a glance of such poisonous hatred that Savinien was for a moment stunned. He relinquished the Descourtieux, who flapped like a raven to Monsieur de Mauvières and took refuge behind his chair. Savinien met their eyes, eyes blank and hideous with a rage he could not at all explain, in continued perplexity. He fidgeted. His father lifted his upper lip like a dog.

"So," he croaked, "you break houses. And insult women?"

Elizabeth bridled, and Savinien leaped at the thought of his stupidity. He saw it all, and the rage that now took hold of him made that of his father and his father's woman a negligible and feeble thing. Still, he said nothing, waiting for words, and Monsieur de Mauvières was deceived. "Begone," he whispered, "you whelp of hell. You impious, parricidal fool, begone!"

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At this his son laughed. Swiftly he stepped forward, took the woman by the shoulder, and in an instant had put her outside the room and locked the door against her. He heard her pawing the wood without and whining like a she-wolf. Savinien, aware of footsteps behind him, turned in time and knocked the rusty poignard from his father's fist.

"Sit down, old dolt," he said, and pushed Mauvières back into his chair. He took a stool, brought it close, sat down, and thrust his face forward. He was trembling slightly with an excitement in which anger and shame and sorrow for his mother were nicely compounded. Like a ferret cornered, his father still showed his yellow teeth and coruscant, immobile eyes. But he was silent. Savinien, speaking, felt the old man's hatred play upon him like a jet of filthy air.

"Monsieur, you indulge in lechery beyond your years. And you defile the bed in which I was born. So that is where my moneys go, to indulge the whims of a bawd who wears my mother's apparel? That is why I am cut off a pauper while you, old goat, plenish the desires of a slut whom I shall have whipped from here to the Gate of Montmartre. Ha, monsieur, I will have you known for this. Oyez, oyez, the tale of Monsieur de Mauvières, the ancient satyr, who

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defamed the memory of his lady by adultery with a scabby scullery wench and starved his son to buy the she-dog baubles. A fine gossip for the faubourgs! Monsieur de Mauvières, Abel de Cyrano, son to a Guisard pander, grandson to a baker of Bergamo, thief of coat-arms and mummer of gentlemen, pilloried for the people, stripped of pretension, naked as a Barbary ape. How does the idea like you, my father? Mauvières, Bergerac, titles filched, and sold as, if you could, or if your doxy wished it, you would sell the very particule your illustrious father scrabbled in muck to buy from 'Le Balafré,' your gentility, your position, your empty pride, thrown, all of them, into the gutters of the town so that drabs may spit on them! Oh, brave! Spit on Mauvières the venerable whoremaster, the unnatural father, the shameless assassin of domestic dignity. You smile, monsieur? Good, I will have the tale drummed out before night. And as for your female, 'ware whips, Papa, 'ware whips."

Savinien shook from head to heels. He was transported. He felt like Orestes with the rôles altered to suit the case, and beyond the door he heard, to increase his sense of fatal importance, the appalled Descourtieux quaking like a jelly. As for Mauvières he too was quaking, and he had not, as his son had declared, smiled. This son,

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whom he had always believed more than half mad though manageable, had now proved unmanageable, though he was still quite mad enough to carry out his threat and destroy his credit wherever he was known. Not to mention this promise of public chastisement for his *bonne* who, if chastised, would certainly embellish the story. A whipping, Mauvières admitted to himself, had never done any woman harm, but a public whipping meant talk, and what talk! No, no, he must talk his maniacal son into reason and later spend a little money in having the idiot put away, perhaps, if necessary, killed. He stirred in his chair and pondered. It would have horrified him to know that his son had precisely plumbed his thoughts. He affected a quaver, pitiable and weak, and addressed Savinien.

“What would you have? I am old, I need attention, my sons have left me. Elizabeth, well, well, she is a woman, but I deny that I have given her your portion or allowed her in any way to supplant Madame de Mauvières. See, now, your wild talk has so astonished my wits that I can no longer think. Elizabeth, bah, she is nothing to me save a dependable servant. True, I observe that to-day and against my orders she is wearing a few little things of Madame’s, and I will beat her for it. But the rest, my poor Savinien, is pure

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dreaming. You are not well, my son, you are feverish. Come, be seated. If you are in straits I will help you, though His Eminence has so taxed us small gentlemen that we have scarce anything left to save us a moiety of our family plate and a jewel or two. But be seated. I will go hungry, if need be, to aid you."

He smiled, intentionally ingratiating, and the effect was extraordinarily repulsive. His face seemed to crumble.

His son shrugged. "Listen, I am not the bird to be caught by that lime. You will, monsieur, do now precisely as I tell you to do."

He went to the door and, opening it, received the Descourtieux against his knees. She had been upon her own knees, her ear against the panels. Now she got to her feet, simmering like a pot-at-a-boil. Savinien said pleasantly, "Zabeth, go away and take off what you have on. Then collect whatever things were my mother's and place them in a chest, lock this, and bring me the key. Forget nothing, because I have myself a good memory. Quickly now, my girl, or you will have a sore back."

Speechless, the woman looked toward her master, who nodded, grinning with fury. She departed, and Savinien chewed a finger and meditated.

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"Monsieur," he observed finally, "I do not concern myself with your soul. If you wish this animal, I deplore it, but no more. But if you have the temerity to give to her what was my mother's or what is my own I will put an end to your mischief. If you leave your properties to her I will publish your conduct and have your will forbidden. You owe to me, as I judge, above a thousand pistoles, which are, mark, from my mother's dowry and so rightfully due to me in allowance. You blench?"

His father had, in fact, turned the colour of old cheese and was now moaning like a racked heretic.

Savinien clacked his tongue. "Tchk! tchk! What are a thousand pistoles? Three years' dispensation, no more, which brings to my mind another thing. I must have another thousand, to enable me to leave you undisturbed for another three years, always providing that you live in the observance of my mother's memory and do not force the chest in which her possessions will repose . . ."

His father seemed to be expiring. He flapped his hands and writhed, inarticulate, in his chair. Savinien frowned. He knew that his father was not poor and this display of parsimony was obscene. "Keys," he said sharply, and automatically

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Mauvières drew them from a pouch that hung about his waist. Briskly Savinien seized them, and his father rose, gibbering, to recover them. Savinien, however, shook his head. "Where are they, your coffers?" Speechless his father led him upstairs into a bedroom and, with his son's assistance, drew from the alcove a low iron box. He received the keys and opened his bank. Within, Savinien estimated, was a comfortable fortune in new coins, including plate. He whistled.

"*Peste*, monsieur, I congratulate you. At the least, two hundred thousand. And what a coffer! No smaller, I swear, than a Turkish galley. Make it, I beg, three thousand."

Mauvières, taken with a palsy, tottered and fell upon a bed. There he lay, making sounds of agony as Savinien, with scrupulous care, counted out three thousand pistoles. This business took time, and he was cautious enough to lock the door while he counted. He doubted whether the Des-courtieux knew of these riches, and he had not the slightest doubt but that, if she learned of them, she would poignard her old lover while he slept. When he was done he placed his money in a large chamois boot-bag, a very commodious affair designed for hunting jacks, and roused his father, who was sunk in a stupor of woe. He replaced the coffer, groaning with effort, locked it,

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and returned the key to his father's pouch. Then he unlocked the door suddenly, flung it open, and dragged the listening woman in by the hair.

"So," he said, "you haunt the wrong sides of doors like Father Joseph himself. Good, you must be taught your place."

He shook her and with amazing swiftness she stooped her head sideways and sunk her strong peasant's teeth into his hand. Then, as he cursed and relinquished her, she flung a key at his face and fled. Savinien exclaimed and mopped his brow. "Observe, Papa! She will do your business for you and abscond with your every penny. Do not flatter yourself that a man of your age can satisfy Zabeth. Doubtless she has a flock of lovers whom she will join one night with twenty years' savings. And they will not be her savings, monsieur. Come, come, monsieur, bleat no more. I have taken but what long ago you should have given me. You have still a tidy sum left, and many a son who has been abused as I have been would leave you poor as a Franciscan. Take my advice, monsieur, and keep your keys close. And remember my words touching my mother's chattels. I will use precautions to oversee this household. Monsieur, your servant."

He quit the room, stamping heavily, then, upon tiptoes, ran swiftly along the corridor and leaped

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like a cat at a window embrasure hung with arras. "Again," he muttered, and this time held the *bonne* in a chancery grip of steel. "Zabeth, if you dare to wear my mother's garments again I will find means to relieve you of your skin. Do you hear? And if harm comes to Monsieur, tigress, I will have you in the Châtelet where you will rot into pieces and nourish rats."

The woman, blubbering, fell upon her knees and swore that she was guiltless of any sinful thought and, as he turned to go, bit him again, shrewdly, in the calf of his leg. Her savagery astounded him, but he did not tarry to tame it. He was anxious to be gone with his money out of this house that smelled of nastiness, of filthy thoughts and the deeds engendered from them. Slamming the house door behind him, he shouldered his bag and was about to hail a carriage when, to his alarm, he saw Abel de Cyrano, his elder brother, making his way toward him between the pools of steaming sewage that disfigured the street. "*Peste*," said Savinien, and pulled his cloak well over the bag that was upon his shoulder.

Abel hailed him. "Monsieur."

Savinien bowed. "Monsieur." He scrutinized his brother somewhat coldly and was upon his guard.

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Abel seemed ill at ease. "You have seen Monsieur de Mauvières?"

"Yes, I waited upon the good old man."

Abel's face crumpled like a kerchief. He blasphemed surprisingly and spat. "Good old man, *hein?* Ah, monsieur, it is easy to see that you have been long away. My poor friend, he is the most wicked, the most false-hearted, the most lecherous, and withal the most cruel old monster ever spawned to plague mankind."

Speechless with amazement, Savinien gaped at him. "You, his favourite, you do not revere him? You who have had half my allowance——"

Abel in his turn appeared bemused. "What nonsense is here. Since '40 I have not had a penny from him, and before that a pittance. He is lavish with that strumpet who was used to wash Madame's dishes, but I, his eldest son, have nothing. Nor, when our sisters Marie and Anne were married, did he furnish them with even one sou for dowers. But, bah, I scorn the old crocodile. I am married to a charming girl, and she brought me sufficient dower to start me upon a career. Monsieur, that recalls to my mind that we have not had the honour of your presence in our house. I beg that you will dine with us."

Forgetful of his burden, Savinien embraced his brother, and the gold fell with a tintinnabulous

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crash to the earth. Abel started. Savinien started and blushed. He picked up his bag and said frankly, "That, monsieur, is money which I have persuaded Monsieur de Mauvières to contribute to my support. If the idea pleases you, I will accompany you to your house and, when we have dined, instruct you in the manner in which I obtained it."

Abel, dumbly, nodded and led his extraordinary cadet to his small but comfortable home. Here his wife, who was in effect charming and who had been Marie Marcy, the daughter of a good bourgeois family, served them good dishes and inspected her brother-in-law with awe and curtsied whenever he spoke to her, a proceeding that delighted Savinien, since her shoulders were very white and plump and adorable when seen a little from above. So the meal was pleasant, and when Madame de Cyrano had left the table Savinien filled his glass and to his brother, who was, he was surprised to find, extremely amiable, he explained his morning's actions.

"Monsieur, I will be frank with you and speak as a brother should. I did attend Monsieur de Mauvières, and I found, to my horror, that he had invested the frightful Elizabeth with Madame our mother's garments. So I made a scene, and I say to you, monsieur, that at the Hôtel de

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Bourgogne there have been no finer frenzies. And I was sincere. I am not, like yourself, so fortunate as to be married——”

Abel bowed.

“—so that, word of honour, I should have discovered Monsieur’s infamy to the world had he not agreed to my terms. Zabeth will cease wearing Madame’s apparel, and Monsieur acceded to my demand that he reimburse me for almost five years of penury. Now, monsieur, if you agree to it, I counsel you to wait upon Monsieur our father and say to him but one phrase: ‘I have seen Monsieur de Bergerac, and I wish three thousand pistoles.’ You will get them. And you should get them. It is not blackmail, for he owes us our mother’s money in allowance. After that, leave him in peace. What do you say?”

Abel gravely lifted his glass. “Understood, monsieur, and believe us to be, my wife and I, always at your service and anxious to serve you.”

Rising, the brothers embraced and kissed each other several times. After which, with the where-withal to sit under Gassendi for years, if he chose, Monsieur de Bergerac returned to his lodgings in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier.

Chapter x

THE PURSUIT OF LETTERS

HIS literary career was now ready to be launched. He had money, he was received at Gassendi's lectures, he was known to the Libertins. From this time forward until the end of his life he would labour at his writing without diminishing ardour, and if the scholarly complexion of his mind were disturbed by brawlers and so altered to one of violence, it would not be at the instance of his own will to quarrel. He removed from his too modest lodgings in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier, and engaged more spacious chambers in the Rue de Tournon, chambers which, he earnestly hoped, would

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never be empty of his new friends and never silent. Then, when his books and wardrobes were disposed, he proceeded to the Croix de Lorraine to bid Tristan, Poquelin, Linières, and Chappelle, and as many more as he might find, to attend his housewarming.

It was early evening, and the accustomed company was not yet sitting in the cabaret, but Tristan was already at his "dear necessity," as he preciously termed drinking, and seemed discomposed. Perceiving Monsieur de Bergerac, he permitted himself a roar like that of a sea lion, angry yet fearful. "Ah, my friend, what a sight have I just seen!"

Monsieur de Bergerac sat down, ordered Burgundy, then watered it until it resembled a feeble wine called Rosée d'Anjou, an infant's tippie. "Well," he said receptively, drinking with caution, "what have you seen?"

Tristan, whose singular quality it was to be able to weep upon demand, produced two tears which he allowed to run down his cheeks. "A woman beautiful and prodigal and witty, with splendour and power, position and pity——"

Monsieur de Bergerac smiled. "*Dame*," he observed. "I too have seen Mademoiselle."

"It was not Mademoiselle. I am speaking of

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my one-time inspiration, Madame de Neuvillette."

"What is this?"

"I am telling you. I was about to tell you, had you not interrupted me, in extemporaneous couplets, rough it is true, but which promised. You have banished them from my mind. I tell you, therefore, in prose that I have seen Madame de Neuvillette in the abominable vestments of a lay sister of the Daughters of the Cross, with hairs upon her chin and a face sunken by barbaric emaceration, kissing the malodorous sores of a beggar in the Rue Saint-Antoine!"

He was delighted to observe that his words made an impression second only to that caused by the première of his tragedy *Marianne* upon the amateurs of the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Monsieur de Bergerac stared at him with the eyes of one who sees the entombed arise, and his hands shook upon the table before him. Tristan, unwilling that this gratifying effect should pass, and with the tactlessness of a very bad dramatist, added, "And more, and even more frightful, while I stood watching a procession of the Holy Sacrament and meditating upon the sad case of the poor kneeling fools about me, a bourgeois statured like Gargantua kicked me behind the knees and forced me to do likewise."

Monsieur de Bergerac, however, seemed not to hear the relation of this inquiry. He was muttering to himself and seemed bemused. He was, actually, appalled by Tristan's experience and felt personally aggrieved, even outraged, by the Church's conquest of his cousin, even though it had long been apparent to him that her conversion to extreme piety was complete. But to become a lay sister of the reformed order of Saint Dominic and humble her spirit by caressing the afflictions of beggars was beyond toleration. Doubtless she had endowed the convent, sold the Hôtel de Neuville, destroyed the one genuinely noble prop of the bourgeois Cyrano. Monsieur de Bergerac ejaculated and beat the table with his fist. "Finished!" he said, "finished!" Then, to the attentive dramatist he observed, "Monsieur, had any lout forced me to kneel before a procession composed of anthropophagous monks, extortioning nuns, or corrupt prelates I should have left him a sieve through which one might strain soup without hindrance. Monsieur, your health."

He drank his watered wine and with an effort dismissed the matter from his mind. His one fear was that he might one day see Madame de Neuville at her devotional attendance upon mendicants and so suffer a severe physical disaffection.

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Tristan in the meanwhile racked his brains for further tidings with which to grip his audience, but before he might confect anything worthy of his talents D'Assoucy entered with Chapelle, Linières, and Bachaumont. D'Assoucy said at once and without salutations, "Gentlemen, the odour of pastry in this room causes the juices of my stomach to chant altogether in a loud voice. After all, I agree with Saint-Amant and Scarron who in his letter to Potel declares that

*"Je suis pour la mangeaille
Il n'est rien tel qu'être glouton!"*

Therefore, let us eat, let us eat."

Behind him Monsieur de Bergerac perceived suddenly the bright, profoundly inspective eyes of his friend Poquelin and arose to salute him. Poquelin, bowing to the company, said gloomily, "At least I may eat a little, even though one cup would cause me to agonize for a day. Monsieur, your servant."

Jacquot, host of the Croix de Lorraine, was heard shouting orders in the belly of the house, and dishes commenced to file into the tap room as on two legs, since they were so vast as to hide even the shoulders of the boys who bore them upon their heads. D'Assoucy loosened his sword

belt and the waistband of his breeches and fell to work, eating as though to save his life, eyes glazed a little, panting with anxiety lest one dish escape his attention. Tristan, too, concentrated upon his dinner, scorning table service and employing his fingers, with which he devoured a leg of lamb once nourished on the salty grasses of the tidal meadows near Mont Saint-Michel, while D'Assoucy yelped a little with anguish lest his friend make away with all. Chapelle, nurtured carefully, ate delicately with a fork, as did the gentleman Linières and Bachaumont, and Monsieur de Bergerac and Poquelin were not gourmands. They ate four dishes only and discussed Gassendi, who intended to travel shortly into Holland with François Luillier as a companion.

"Luillier," remarked Poquelin, "is astonishing. He held the position of Treasurer of France and sold it for no other reason than to aid Des Barreaux, who was, at the time, as everyone knows, seducing Marion de l'Orme."

De Bergerac, who had been at war at the time, expressed surprise. "You say—? And Monsieur le Grand?"

"Later. It was Des Barreaux who was the first, though Marion was more than willing. Her people are important in the Champagne, but she

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was born gallant. But conceive to yourself a man of Luillier's depravity being well with Gassendi, not to speak of Patin, Naudé, Le Vayer, and Peiresc."

Chapelle, used to discussions of his father's known dissipations, smiled. "My father is like Gassendi. He has two quite separate lives. One, women. The other, learning. You will admit, monsieur, that they never become confused. Gassendi has his religion and his philosophy, and he and my father meet upon the latter ground. Gassendi does not care for women nor my father for religion but philosophy, ah, there they are sympathetic. As for his aiding Des Barreaux, why not? Marion is not inexpensive and cannot live on a lover's epigrams, even though he be her first lover and the epigrams the best in Paris."

"The child speaks truth," mumbled D'Assoucy, who was dispatching the last of a large carp, "but the epigrams of Des Barreaux are not so good as that."

Tristan, remembering the injury done his dignity that day during the procession of the Sacrament, defended Des Barreaux. "A brave man, a man of heart. Did he not beat Garasse, the Jesuit who would have assassinated Théophile? Did he not, at Montauban, confound the preaching of a Huguenot by singing drinking songs? Did he

not, watching, even as I watched to-day, the procession of the Holy Sacrament, snatch the calotte from the head of a priest and, hurling it into a foot of Paris mud, bid the man walk uncovered in the presence of the Deity? Did he not, dining in this very cabaret with Saint-Ibal, Bardouville, Faret, Saint-Amant, and Monsieur le Comte d'Harcourt, challenge the skies by saying, when a burst of thunder interrupted the entrance of the *omelette au lard*: 'What a to-do about a dish of eggs,' and so calm the terror of his companions? *Hein?*'"

"It was at Saint-Cloud," objected D'Assoucy.

"The fact remains the same," replied Tristan firmly. "The anger of God is not more terrible in Paris than in Saint-Cloud. I say to you that Des Barreaux is a lion for bravery and his epigrams as good as most."

"Good," said Monsieur de Bergerac, chewing the cud of his resentment against the Church that had subjugated Madame de Neuville and destroyed his one noble connection. "Good, I esteem Monsieur des Barreaux."

Poquelin, his narrow, pallid face a mildly satirical mask, murmured, "And yet, with all this hatred of the Church, there is not one among you who does not envy the faith of good Christians, the faith that assures immortality, that promises

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paradise, that defies the eternal dissolution of body and mind and rejects the denial of a spirit which cannot die."

Monsieur de Bergerac was thoughtful. "Monsieur, I swear to you that I am like Saint-Évremond. I cannot convince myself that, when I have once more become mixed with clay, I shall, at an appointed time, arise. Nor is it possible for me to believe that I, Savinien de Cyrano, am, in spirit, immortal."

Poquelin considered him. "But you envy those who may convince themselves, who can believe. Here! I give you Saint-Évremond himself:

*"'Les vrais Chrétiens, plus heureux mille fois
Dans la pureté de leurs lois,
Goûteront les douceurs d'une innocente vie,
Qui d'une plus heureuse encore sera suivie.' "*

Monsieur de Bergerac nodded. "That is true. I do, in fact, envy them."

Tristan and D'Assoucy, staring with eyes dulled by feeding, suddenly gave tongue in alarm at the solemnity which seemed about to fall upon the company. "Drink!" they screeched in unison, and fell to plying the three boys, who had been intent on the spectacle, rare in their experience, of two young men conversing on the subject of

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immortality. Chapelle and Linières, however, refused more wine. The former said charmingly to Monsieur de Bergerac: "Monsieur, your speech delights me. Cannot we remove to a place where one may talk without interruption?"

"It was my intention to invite you to my lodgings. There we can be private, and before long this room will be filled with types of all sorts, including brawlers. Gentlemen, I bid you all to accompany me."

The party rose, D'Assoucy not forgetting to drink whatever wine remained untasted in the cups upon the table. In this he was shameless, observing in answer to Poquelin's smile that it always grieved him to leave a table upon which a single morsel of food or drop of wine remained. Then he lurched toward Bachaumont and embraced him. The boy pushed him away. "You are already drunk, monsieur. Keep your distance."

Poquelin shrugged his shoulders and, putting his arm through that of Monsieur de Bergerac, said contemptuously, "What a brute! Imagine to yourself, monsieur, that Corneille himself has said that Apollo might envy the airs which he has composed. Bah! I would not lower myself to collaborate with him even in an epigram, and I am nobody. When you reflect that he was once

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condemned to be burned at Montpellier for sodomy you know all. But let us go to your lodgings."

They took two carriages and crossed the river, rolled over the Pont-Neuf, to the right of the magnificent façade of the unfinished Hôtel de Nevers, through the Porte de Nesle, and up the Rue de Seine, across the Rue Saint-Germain and into the Rue de Tournon. Beyond the city walls the smell of the fields was fresh as that of grassed sod in spring, and free from the almost tangible stench of the Paris streets. Tristan shivered. "You live then in the wilderness," he said plaintively to De Bergerac. "Do we go beyond Saint-Sulpice?"

"I like the country. And besides, Saint-Sulpice is not the Holy Sepulchre."

"*Rus in urbis*," murmured Chapelle. "In God's name, Tristan, are you afraid that wolves will attack you if you set foot beyond the walls?"

They reached Monsieur de Bergerac's lodgings, and while their host sent out for wine, examined his belongings. He had but few, but Poquelin was astonished at a collection of Spanish authors, which included all the picaresque novels of the past century, *Lazarillo de Tormes*, Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache*, the *Picara Justina* of Francisco López de Òbeda, and the *Historia de la Vida del Buscón Pablos*, of the illus-

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trious Quevedo. Examining these volumes, Poquelin observed that he did not see the *Don Quixote* of Cervantes Saavedra. Monsieur de Bergerac was astonished. "But I had it. I gave it away to a boy whom I taught at the College of Lisieux. It is not good, a farrago of nonsense and unworthy of companionship with Quevedo."

"*Tiens!*" said Poquelin, even more astonished.

"But yes, monsieur. Quevedo, now, there is a man. Cross-eyed, club-footed, learned in theology, law, French, Latin, Greek, Arabic, and Hebrew, and at the same time a master swordsman capable of disarming Pacheco Narvaez, the greatest professional master at arms in Europe, and of writing works of genius between duels."

"Confess it," said Chapelle, "that is your ambition. You are at this moment a great fencer. You wish now to write books as a guard against the tedium of combat in the Pré-aux-Clercs."

"Which is conveniently close at hand," added Tristan, decanting Vouvray.

Poquelin persisted for a moment in learning more of his host's contempt for the veteran of Lepanto. "Nevertheless, monsieur, while it is not the relation of a picaro's wandering, I recommend that you read the *Don Quixote* again. You will find it very passable upon close attention."

"I have not the time. I have at present a play

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in mind that will require my entire concentration for at least a week. It is to be satirical, somewhat in the manner of Quevedo, perhaps the narrative, in acts and dialogue, of a picaresque pedant." Pleasurably, Monsieur de Bergerac thought of Grangier and what he, that pedant's former and neglected pupil, would do in his regard. D'Assoucy, who until now had seemed to be sunk in a stupor, now roused himself and was as a new man. The glutton's one charm, a gift for fluent, sparkling, and diverting conversation, was ordinarily capable of functioning at this time, midway between dinner and midnight, when he had become sobered from the wine taken at his repast and not yet drunken from that invariably absorbed at the latter hour. What work he did or had done, "*Ovide en belle humeur*" and considerable verses or musical compositions, was accomplished during these two hours of sobriety, and his talk, admired by more than Corneille, now broke from him as though involuntarily, like the sudden song of a canary which has been stubbornly silent for hours. Poquelin alone did not attend him. Tristan, Chapelle, Bachaumont, Linières, and his host listened to him with pleasure, prompted him when he seemed about to seize a bottle before his hour, laughed at his sallies, prodded him to extravagances of expression

typical of the day but more exaggerated even than the ingenious Voiture's, and made the most of the only quality which rendered the man tolerable to their society. Only Poquelin, envisaging the day when as Molière he would be the first author-actor-manager of France, sat apart and reflected that Monsieur de Bergerac's idea for a satirical comedy was very far from being a poor one.

After a time he took his leave. He had a long way to go, he explained, and privily he declared to his host that since he was forbidden tipsiness the maunderings of D'Assoucy were grown too much for his stomach. He would return, however, perhaps be of use in the writing of this proposed comedy. Quietly he left, and since it was now midnight the remainder of the company engaged to join D'Assoucy in wine. Inasmuch as Monsieur de Bergerac did not accompany them they did not arouse the entire neighbourhood with carousing, and went home before dawn, taking D'Assoucy, long fallen insensible, with them as though he were a sack of the wheat of Vendôme.

The days that followed became for Monsieur de Bergerac filled with pleasant incident. He worked all the morning at writing, exercising his pen upon every literary form admired in the

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circle in which now he moved and seemed securely fixed. He wrote letters to imaginary mistresses in which he employed every device known to the masters of allusion and antithesis and preciousness familiar in the salon of the Hôtel Rambouillet. He wrote epigrams and accounts of dreams packed with tortured symbols and delirious riddles. He wrote satires and diatribes and a little verse, and studied Quevedo for effects to be employed in his comedy. His afternoons he devoted to a resumption of an art long ago taught him by his lamented cousin Madeleine in the days when her salon was the pride of the Marais. He paid the dancing master, David Dupron, 240 livres to instruct him, for a period of two years, in the newest dances and in fashionable deportment, thus causing Tristan to marvel, Poquelin to shrug, and Chapelle to applaud. To Tristan's questions he replied that he might one day be bidden to court and so must be prepared to lead some great lady in branle, courante, or pavane, but the truth was that he was become so steeped in his Spaniards that he wished to be as like them in person and qualities as possible. Being now something of a scholar, a great deal of a swordsman, he wished to round out his abilities by becoming a courtier as well, simply that it might not be said of him that, though brilliant,

he was impossibly deficient in social usage. To Poquelin, who knew and respected him as a bourgeois, this was folly, but Chapelle, trained to the posturings of salons, found it admirable and all that was required to complete his friend's already eminent promise as a gentleman of letters and the sword.

Monsieur de Bergerac did not, however, allow himself to neglect this latter. Since he now had but little opportunity to duel, so known was his quality of fence, he feared lest he lose his touch with his rapier, and so frequented the *salle-d'armes* of the *Sieur Moussard*, known as *La Perche*, and engaged to pay this master ten livres a month for two years of his lessons. Though *La Perche* had nothing to teach him, he gave his client the desired practice, and his *salle-d'armes* was always filled with gentry who came to examine Monsieur de Bergerac's play and seek for new thrusts that only he could execute. Thus his days passed swiftly and were pleasant, and his nights were devoted to conversations in his chambers with Poquelin and Chapelle and that youth's friends, conversations largely literary or philosophic save when D'Assoucy or Tristan, Saint-Amant or others of the gourmand Libertins destroyed a tolerably sober solemnity with distinctly unsober mirth.

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It was after such a symposium as this that Monsieur de Bergerac came once more into public consciousness with a feat of arms that recalled him not only to his old friends of Conti's foot, Messieurs de Bourgogne, de Cuigy, and de Brisailles, but to the very marshals of France themselves, and especially to Gassion. Gassion in the year 1643 was come into his own, and since Rocroy had occupied a position as a general officer second only to that held by the Duke of Enghien. Indeed it was Gassion who shared with that prince the credit of the Great Condé's first victory. The Cardinal-Duke was dead on December 7, 1642, having, in the extremity of his malady, caused Cinq-Mars and De Thou to precede him from a scaffold on the Place de Grève. Louis survived his minister but briefly, and when Rocroy was fought Mazarin governed, with Anne of Austria, for the child Louis XIV. Since his return from Arras Monsieur de Bergerac had taken no part in public matters of any sort and had completely lost sight of the comrades of his military years. Le Bret, resigning from Monsieur de Carbon's guards, had gone to Montauban to resume with thanksgivings the life of a man of the robe. Carbon de Casteljaloux himself was always afield, and his friends of Conti's regiment Monsieur de Bergerac never saw since they too

were either at war or at court. Gassion was, however, in Paris for a brief period in '43, and with him a regiment or two of infantry, including that of the crooked Bourbon, Conti, a fact that Monsieur de Bergerac ignored until this affray at the Porte de Nesle, when the account of his sword's activity made so great a clamour that the Louvre itself rang with it.

It befell, upon this occasion, that the boy Linières, taking leave of his friend, was proceeding toward the walls unmindful of danger when a musketeer, a man he barely knew, checked him in the Rue de Seine and asked him if he required assistance. Linières, startled, replied that he was moderately in wine but capable of walking unaided and intended to do so. Whereat the musketeer, one of De Tréville's by his cloak's gold-embroidered insignia, informed him that De Grammont, once known as the Comte de Guiche, had dispatched bravos to arrange his affair and that these blades now awaited him at the Porte de Nesle. Linières, shocked horribly, remembered in a moment that he had offended De Grammont by a descriptive quatrain loosed in a cabaret much frequented by that nobleman, a quatrain referring to his known turpitudes, and far from stingless. He saw, therefore, that unless a miracle should preserve him, he would,

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long before his twentieth year, quit this earth and, according to Monsieur de Bergerac's philosophy, go nowhere and cease entirely to be. He implored the musketeer in consequence to return with him to the Rue de Tournon and describe his information to Monsieur de Cyrano de Bergerac, of whom doubtless the musketeer had heard. The musketeer, it seemed, had heard of Monsieur de Cyrano de Bergerac and had even had the honour of serving him in a matter of no importance resolved a year or so before behind the Carmes Déchaux. Only the time to invite a friend, and he would accompany Linières with genuine pleasure.

Thus, precisely at the moment when Monsieur de Bergerac was removing his chausses preparatory to retiring, his friend knocked him up and appeared flanked by two young men in a familiar uniform anxious to do him deference. Monsieur de Bergerac welcomed them politely but was mystified. Linières, still pale, mopped his brow.

"In a word, monsieur, I am about to be assassinated."

Monsieur de Bergerac, readjusting his garments, observed him for signs of mania.

"You say——?"

"My dear friend, I say just that. Monsieur——" he looked inquiringly at the musketeer, who had

warned him, and that young man said modestly "Rabutin" and bowed to De Bergerac—"Monsieur de Rabutin tells me that Monsieur de Grammont has appointed a number of his gentlemen to cut me down in revenge for my little '*jeu d'esprit*' made in a careless moment at lansquenet not long ago. These gentlemen, accompanied by linkmen so that they shall not risk slaughtering the wrong Linières, now wait me at the Porte de Nesle. May I therefore beg your hospitality for the night?"

The musketeers looked acutely disappointed. Monsieur de Bergerac looked astonished.

"But, my poor friend, why? Why allow yourself to be discommoded for such a trifle? Doubtless Monsieur de Grammont considers it diverting to attempt to frighten you, or it may be that it is not you at all for whom these gentlemen wait with their linkmen. No, no. I will in person, if you will permit me, accompany you to the Porte de Nesle and find the answer to all this. I beg you will not think me presumptuous, monsieur. For my own pleasure I will even see you in your bed and smooth your counterpane."

The musketeers applauded these remarks. They were in keeping with the reputation of Monsieur de Cyrano de Bergerac and would compose material for many anecdotes. Linières,

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however, thought them incautious. He was not an adventurous boy and possessed neither a strong wrist nor a strong heart. Still, he could not refuse such an offer. He thanked his friend, but the colour did not return to his face, and the fact that the musketeers, having secured Monsieur de Bergerac's permission to accompany him, seemed wonderfully gratified, convinced him that such fellows were spectacles of folly.

Monsieur de Bergerac was very shortly ready, and the party set out, Linières three paces in the rear and low in his mind. The musketeers, however, and his friend Monsieur de Bergerac were distinctly in spirits, and when they were come out upon the river acted as though they were on their way to a wedding. At this juncture Monsieur de Bergerac said kindly to the musketeers that he must ask them to allow him to engage the first swords and that under no circumstances must they needlessly risk their lives upon a private quarrel. To which they replied that their friend and protector Monsieur de Tréville would never forgive his musketeers if they did not share a little in the glory of the approaching quarrel, and that it would be an act of the greatest generosity on the part of Monsieur de Bergerac if that gentleman would suffer their company until the matter was arranged. So Monsieur

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de Bergerac permitted them to follow him at a distance of ten paces and proceeded toward the flares that marked the party lounging at the Porte de Nesle.

Linières remained at the corner of the Rue de Seine, leaning against the wall of the great Hôtel de la Reine Marguerite and cursing his extraordinary facility in the composition of libellous quatrains. He was, he admitted to himself with candour, a coward, but that he could not help.

In the meantime his friend had come within fifty feet of Monsieur de Grammont's bullies. He took off his cloak, folded it over his left arm, drew his rapier, and proceeded, followed still by his admirers at a distance of ten paces.

Two swordsmen came to meet him, observing in high voices that though it was customary to drown puppies, steel would do as well.

The musketeers at these words permitted themselves to smile at each other with the highest anticipation. They were both under twenty years of age and as frolic as colts, besides worshipping heroes of which the great-nosed Monsieur de Bergerac was not the least. They shivered with glee when suddenly that champion snapped his prodigious blade in the air before him and ran down upon the two who came to meet him in a

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manner that, it was evident, these did not expect.

Monsieur de Bergerac parried two simple thrusts *en septime* and, riposting, killed a fellow invaluable to De Grammont, known as Claudet, and so severely wounded another of that nobleman's tail that the man coughed himself out of the world while the engagement was still proceeding. Then, as the remaining twenty bravos approached he placed himself between the barrel of a turret and the wall and faced a quarter circle of blades with all the coolness imaginable while the musketeers routed the linkmen, who fled into the city or fell into the Seine. In the darkness which ensued, a darkness barely mitigated by a waning moon hidden at times by heavy clouds, Monsieur de Bergerac wounded seven assailants while De Grammont's people fought in confusion now with the devil at the wall, now with themselves. Finally, the survivors drew off, panting, and conferred. This swordsman was never Linières. Perhaps it was the ghost of Bouteville, a soul-sickening thought, or, actually and in person, the Black One. Quaveringly they asked the enemy his name, and, doing so, beheld the moonlight silhouette his figure against the wall. Also, for an instant, they saw the sickly light upon his face. A gentleman named Montmor, who had been in Flanders, put up. "Friends," he said, "I

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take my leave of you. I am as courageous as most, but I am by nature provident of my health. Yonder is not Linières, as you know. What you do not know is that this fury who has baulked us is a Gascon gentleman tolerably well known to the armies. He is of a family in the Périgord. De Bergerac."

Monsieur de Montmor went away, saluting, as he did so, him who stood beside the wall, bedding his point in the toe of his boot and snorting like a buffalo.

He was followed by twelve other individuals who also saluted the swordsman at the wall. They were positive that Monsieur de Grammont had no quarrel with Monsieur de Cyrano de Bergerac, a veteran of two campaigns and, in some sort, a one-time protégé of the Marshal de Gassion. When they were gone the musketeers, in turn, embraced the prodigious fighter. Now that they had witnessed this marvel among feats of arms they were desirous of running all the way to the Hôtel de Tréville in order to tell of it. They waited, however, until, as was expected, two carriages appeared to transport the wounded to their lodgings, after which they took leave of Monsieur de Bergerac and vanished toward the Luxembourg, coursing like leverets.

Monsieur de Bergerac assured himself sadly



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that he had indeed killed two men. He was, as always after duelling, depressed and he was somewhat doubtful as to whether Linières were worth so much swordplay. Claudet, he remembered, had charged the tercios before Arras and no doubt had been valiant. Without seeking out the boy whom he had protected he went directly home. For the time being he was emotionally exhausted.

Linières, too, went home, shuddering as he passed the cadavers by the river and, in spite of his Libertinism, crossing himself forty times. Linières was not typical of his times or of his class, and even in his own estimation was often contemptible.

Next morning the word was in every cabaret and antechamber in Paris that the Gascon beaked like an ancient galley, the somewhat shabby frequenter of the Libertins, the ex-guardsman and casualty of Arras, and once the first duellist in the armies, had routed a regiment single handed and escaped whole. While Monsieur de Bergerac was labouring at the writing that constituted his morning's activity, Messieurs de Cuigy, de Bourgogne, and de Brissailles were spreading the tale on the stairs at the Louvre and the King's Musketeers were engaged in listening skeptically to Monsieur de Rabutin, whose tongue multiplied

the wonders of the affray with every repetition of the facts. Gassion had the matter from De Tréville, whose version, since it was supplied by two of his own men, was notable, and the little man, now the most courted military personage in the kingdom, was at once good enough to ask that Monsieur de Bergerac attend him at his convenience.

When, at court, the Queen and her minister had withdrawn, the three friends of Conti's foot set out immediately to find their former comrade, and at the Croix de Lorraine were directed to the fencing school in the Rue Saint-Jacques. Thither went they, confident that their man would be overjoyed to learn that his military future was at last infallibly assured. They found him, plastronned and in his shirt, practising against La Perche, surrounded by fifty swordsmen among whom were the Duc de Beaufort and the Prince de Marsillac, both young men of action and amateurs of swordplay. When he saw the three inseparables he leaped back and lifted his blade. La Perche aided him to unlatch his protection, and he embraced his friends while Beaufort offered his comfit box to the future author of *Les Maximes* and observed that it was evident that a large nose indicated a large heart. "Monseigneur," replied De Marsillac, "this is

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true. May I call to your attention the nose of the Rochefoucauld, not to speak of that of the Bourbon?"

The most popular of the Great Henry's bastard issue smiled. "And the D'Estrées," he said, and the two went away arm in arm, saluting Monsieur de Bergerac as they did so, bowing to him slightly but pleasantly. They admired skill, and each would have been happy to have had him among their gentlemen, but it was already known that Gassion had preceded them.

In the meantime De Bergerac continued to be embraced by Messieurs de Cuigy, de Bourgogne, and de Brissailles. These gentlemen were warm-hearted and demonstrative and they had always cherished affection for a man whom they believed to be somewhat eccentric but knew to be very honest and brave. "Savinien," they affirmed in unison, "dear friend, you are about to be appointed at least to a captaincy. The marshal himself longs to see you and desires that you attach yourself to his person."

Amazed, they beheld no great light upon Savinien's expressive face.

"You are not elated?" asked Monsieur de Cuigy with anxiety.

"Gassion himself asks that you serve him," amplified Monsieur de Bourgogne.

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Monsieur de Brissailles, taking care to speak distinctly, repeated the entire message. Still, their friend did not cry aloud for joy.

“My poor friends, this glory comes to me too late. Gentlemen, I have no further wish to come to fortune in the wars, and though I may astonish you I must say to you that my eyes are no longer fastened upon the bâton. I am become a private person devoted to the pursuit of letters, and I fight only upon occasions.”

“But you fight upon all occasions——”

“It is said that you fight even in your sleep——”

“Monsieur de Grammont avers that last night you slew ten of his gentlemen and wounded a score. One cannot remain a private person and comport one’s self in such a manner. It is unheard of.”

“Nevertheless . . .” Monsieur de Bergerac smiled at them with resignation. He shrugged and lifted his hands in a slow and measured gesture, causing them to tremble a little as though he were allowing to escape through his fingers the golden sands of a great future. The three officers then sighed and said no more. His eccentricity, they sincerely believed, was not only robbing their friend of wealth and power but was also depriving France of a distinguished general.

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They were privately of the opinion that he should be forced to become Gassion's aide. But they saw that they might do nothing to alter their friend's decision.

So they spoke of other things and carried him away to the Croix de Lorraine, where they were further shocked to learn of his temperance and so cast down that they ordered wine for him in the quantities to which once he had been accustomed and shared between them what he did not drink. They considered with suspicion Tristan, who, pursuant to habit, was absorbing a little wine of Bordeaux which was not dear, a little wine reserved for modest clients, until his friends should arrive and pay for a great vintage, and when D'Assoucy made his appearance they ignored him when he spoke to their friend. They were jealous of these frowsy scribblers who had managed to attract the attention of the finest sword in France, and implored Monsieur de Bergerac to converse with them alone. When they went away they promised to wait upon him regularly at his lodgings until they left Paris, and added loudly that they disliked students.

At being mistaken for students Tristan and D'Assoucy shook with anger, and, when the gentlemen were gone, promised to have them beaten for their insolence.

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But Monsieur de Bergerac was a little melancholy. Now that he had decided irrevocably to be a man of letters rather than a great soldier, he was thoughtful. There existed, after all, no literary Gassion who might befriend him.



Chapter xi

MAD GASCON

INDEED, reflecting, in 1646, upon his fortunes of the three years that had passed since he had conclusively rejected a resumption of a career in arms, Monsieur de Bergerac could observe to Chapelle that without patronage the creation of art was impossible. Chapelle judged this to be, in substance, true. It was no secret, declared the younger man, that Saint-Amant, Tristan, D'Assoucy, Sarrasin, and their like were all of them preserved from indigence by noblemen and noblewomen to whom flattering dedications were sufficient rewards.

“And you?” asked Chapelle.

"In time I shall certainly require a Mæcenæ. Certainly, since '43, when I resolutely refused the protection of Gassion, I have done little to advance my credit in this life."

It was true. Since that year Monsieur de Bergerac had failed to replace his reputation as a swordsman with any fame as a man of letters, though he had written much and laboured to improve his style. His manuscripts, passed from hand to hand among his friends, had, however, found no wider currency, and to the general public it remained his sword, and not his pen, that entitled him to remark. And, unavoidably, he contributed to the established legend, since people watched for its embellishment while continuing in ignorance of his attempts to secure recognition in his chosen field.

Like all men who achieve eminence or notoriety by violence, he was feared but also laughed at, and Paris was teeming with individuals who would have rejoiced in his death or disgrace. He had, as was expected, drawn upon himself the anger and persecution of the Jesuits, but since this was the lot of all Libertins, it was not to be wondered at. But in addition to the Jesuits, Voiture had organized a clique to cry down his writings, and at court De Grammont caused him to be suspect to all possible patrons as an athe-

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istical assassin, while Gassion, preoccupied with battles, forgot him altogether.

Then, when he could ill afford another powerful enemy, he outraged Monsieur de Candale by making a public jest of that nobleman's protégé, the comedian Montfleury.

This Montfleury, whose true name was Zacharie Jacob, was the pride of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, whither Monsieur de Bergerac went frequently in order to become familiar with the stage and the works of contemporary dramatists. He had not yet written his projected comedy in the vein of Quevedo, but his enthusiasm for the drama remained undiminished, and the more so since Poquelin had made his début as an actor in a theatre of his own establishment near the Porte de Nesle. In consequence he was become a habitué of the boards and the most captious of critics, though not the most discerning. Montfleury, who was more than six feet in height and whose girth was so prodigious that the belts of two men of normal size were required to encircle it, occasioned his disapproval by his conceit alone, for the man was a good actor and possessed a following. He said his lines with effect, simulated passion with such sincerity that he shook like a colossal jelly, and was regularly applauded. His vanity, however, was no less than

his paunch, and when, one afternoon, he heard a prolonged whistling from the pit, he rolled to the candles and glared over them into the always noticeable countenance of Monsieur de Bergerac.

Montfleury, whose eyes and ears were always trained inward upon the subject of his own importance, knew nothing of Monsieur de Bergerac. Therefore, conscious of his immensity, he demanded in a tone of thunderous menace what detail of his performance failed to find favour in the eyes of the little bourgeois with the nose. He, Montfleury added, esteemed a big nose, but he was of two minds as to whether this nose was indeed a nose or the handle of a musketoon. People laughed. Montfleury, like a monstrous balloon, seemed to be inflated to twice his natural size with gratification and cupped an ear the better to catch his victim's answer.

Monsieur de Bergerac, with unaccustomed restraint, replied that Montfleury had lent an evil emphasis to Corneille's couplets expressive of remorse and so caused them to sound ridiculous. Aghast at this insolence, the fat man bawled at him. He called him a minnow's egg; a monster furnished, in place of a nose, with the tail of a crocodile; a moon-struck iniquity produced by the gendering of an ape and a she-vulture. He spat at Monsieur de Bergerac, bit his thumb at

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him, and promised to push his finger through him at the conclusion of the performance and so spare his sword, which he was accustomed to employ only upon men. Then, since Monsieur de Bergerac arose and left the theatre, followed by renewed laughter, he finished his playing and was so cheered by his triumph that he had never played so well.

The booby then strapped on his sword, which, in point of fact, he had never drawn, and swaggered, all beam and belly, out of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, followed by a hundred people who knew all about Monsieur de Bergerac and who, for the sake of a cruel amusement, refused to warn their favourite actor.

Montfleury came at once face to face with his late defeated foe, and, still fatuous, made as if to slap at him as though he were an insect.

A minute afterward his buttons were flying from his apparel, and he knew that he was about to be butchered like a stalled ox. In vain he cried for assistance and prayed for mercy. He turned to flee and to the ecstasy of the crowd displayed a monstrous behind from which, so skilfully had Monsieur de Bergerac employed his point, all clothing had departed. Montfleury, blubbing, seized his breeches but immediately relinquished them. He was beset in the rear by a multitude of

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prickings and with one great, frenzied eye beheld, over his shoulder, the flicker of the tormenting steel. With a sudden high squeal of despair he sat down and put his hands, strange things like pink cushions, over his eyes and resigned himself to death. "*In manus tuas, Domine,*" he hiccupped, and fell upon his back so that he looked like a stranded whale. Montfleury believed that he was dead. He had experienced the illusion of transpiercing steel and opened his eyes, as he believed, on limbo.

Limbo, as he might have suspected, seemed also to contain the fiend with the peerless nose. "Fat one," said the fiend, "I forbid you to appear upon any stage for the space of one month. If you disobey me, it will not be your buttons which I shall sever. Look to it."

The fiend disappeared.

Montfleury fled to Candale and was assured of protection.

Monsieur de Bergerac returned to his lodgings and composed his admirable "Epistle to Montfleury," which was applauded by his friends and which has become immortal as an example of the satire of the times.

A week later he sauntered into the Hôtel de Bourgogne prepared to savour the poesy, at best pedestrian, of Rotrou. Anon, to his furious

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amazement, appeared Montfleury mouthing sentiment in his unctuous and tenor tones, paunch a-quiver, calves shaking, and apparently unmindful of his orders not to play until thirty days were past. He embarked upon a lengthy declamation and was in its midst when he heard from beyond the guttering tallow a screech of emotion. He turned and beheld the fearsome nose that for a week had packed his sleep with nightmares.

"Fat gelding, did I not forbid you the stage for the space of a month?"

Montfleury gaped. He grew pale. In spite of the shouts of the audience bidding him to continue he remained stricken, gazing with a bestial terror at a nose. Slowly he retired from the boards, imploring pardon for his defective memory, mumbling pitiful excuses. He disappeared, and Monsieur de Bergerac faced a theatre filled with outraged amateurs who had been robbed of their performance. They threatened him, commanded him to recall their fat Thespian, surged like animals in front and about him. It was permissible to furnish a comedy at Montfleury's expense when the legitimate play was done with, but unforgivable to interrupt something which they had paid money to enjoy. Monsieur de Bergerac, however, was not to be co-

erced. He issued a collective challenge and found a wall. Then he unsheathed and waited. But if Montfleury had not heard of the combat of the Porte de Nesle the audience of the Hôtel de Bourgogne were thoroughly familiar with it and chose to avoid such another brawl. They went home, but they cherished their resentment, and Monsieur le duc de Candale said publicly and often that it was time that this mad Gascon was put away.

The popularity with the inhabitants of the faubourgs which Monsieur de Bergerac had secured by his accomplishment at the Porte de Nesle was thus speedily dissipated. The bourgeois, who composed the units of authentic power in the matter of making or destroying of reputations, decided, after the matter of Montfleury, that Savinien de Cyrano, Seigneur de Bergerac, was a dangerous maniac capable of harming their amusements and destroying their livelihoods. They concluded that such a man, were he to continue loose in their districts, might cleave a harmless and deserving clerk to the bone for no other reason than that the fellow had failed to salute him, or run a merchant through the body because the unwary townsman had jostled him or seemed diverted at the dimensions of his nose. And also, they were weary of

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this business of a nose. That men should be killed because the good God had, absent-mindedly, created a dissonant feature was ridiculous. It was high time that this person, by some called no more than a Parisian townsman like themselves though by most named a Gascon of the Périgord, was instructed in better ways and restrained from further outrages.

Both at court, therefore, and in the city, Monsieur de Bergerac's credit waned and his ill-wishers increased. Whereat he grew dogged and informed his friends that since Paris was capable only of appreciating his rapier, he would look to it that his rapier was constantly naked before its myriad eyes. He was, nevertheless, genuinely concerned about his fall from public esteem and for months was subject to a mania which informed him that he was being mercilessly persecuted and in constant danger of being assassinated. Cured of this sad imaginative distemper he fell at once prey to a worse. He who had never succumbed to the unbalancing fever of love, who had rigorously avoided the follies grafted upon normal habits of thought and conduct by infatuation with any single woman, and above all, who well knew himself to be far from uxorious, and fundamentally cold, permitted himself to become so preoccupied with an individual who, in the end,

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proved almost his destroyer, that his friends thought him gone mad.

He moped with despair or gibbered with anguish, became more than ever gaunt and more than ever testy in temper, and this even with such boon fellows as Saint-Amant and D'Assoucy.

The object of this strange passion was a damoiselle resident in the Marais whom he had one day seen, followed by her woman, on foot near the Pont du Change. She was of medium height and seemed well formed. Her skin was extraordinarily white, her mouth extraordinarily red, her eyes, large and well spaced, were greener than they were gray, her nose was straight and short, and her hair was the colour of autumnal leaves. She was, in point of fact, personable, and far more lovely than any mistress De Bergerac had yet enjoyed. For weeks he haunted the Marais, seeking for an opportunity to make her acquaintance, and could not do so. She seemed to be a lady of blood, though she went often on foot, for her lacqueys were liveried, and her hôtel, while small, was sumptuous, at least from the outside. It did not occur to Monsieur de Bergerac that Marion de l'Orme's establishment was just such a one as this nor that there were other beautiful young women of Marion's way of life equally well provided for. Nothing oc-

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curred to him save that he must be of this seductive creature's company or perform an outrage which would lose him his life on the Place de Grève. Therefore, one day, he managed to accost this lady's woman as she left her mistress's hotel upon an errand, and begged her to bring about a meeting between himself and Madame. He said that he was a gentleman, enforced this declaration with a handful of coins, and never once thought it astonishing that the woman agreed to make him known, adding that Madame was really Mademoiselle and sometimes benevolent.

Monsieur de Bergerac had lived so long out of conventional society that he thought this to be the most natural thing in the world. Doubtless a young lady of birth orphaned, and not yet ready to sacrifice her freedom to the exigencies of a husband and children.

He went home in a transport of joy and waited to be summoned into the presence of this renescent Venus Anadyomene. He received an invitation to attend upon her, went as if upon wings, and fell into despair because he found her surrounded by gallants, among them Luillier, and able only to smile at him briefly before other guests claimed her attention. He became as one who, tortured with thirst, is allowed to look upon a cool and limpid stream but not to taste of it.

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He waited on her a score of times, and things were ever the same. She seemed to hold more levees than the Queen herself, or the Divine Arthénice, and appeared to become more desirable every day that she lived. It was during this period that Monsieur de Bergerac comported himself to his intimates in a manner fit only for Bedlam. He wrote his *Circe* daily in the most admired vein of Rambouilletized expression, and personally considered these missives to be irresistible. It was beyond his understanding that they should not immediately secure him all favours and a passionate adoration. One of these protestations ran as follows:

MADAME:

The pain which you cause me to suffer is not, certainly, that of Death, but nevertheless I am dying. Since first I saw you I burn, I tremble, my pulse is disordered. Is it, then, the fever? Alas, it is not, for the definition of that malady declares it to be a quarrelsome disproportion between man's physical qualities and it is the perfect harmony of our temperaments that has caused my disease. When I beheld you it seemed to me that I had discovered that word for which all men are enjoined to search. When you spoke I cried in my heart, "That is what I have sought

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a thousand times to say." My heart panted in my entrails, beat against the walls of his prison and cursed the skies, which, having endowed him with desire and the means to recognize his affinity, refused him the power to embrace this once it was found. Yet, so vexed are the skies that this little sovereign [his heart] should not rule absolute in his domain that they cause him to refuse me his services. Of my liver he employs nothing save that which is combustible. He checks the functions of my lungs lest he be refreshed thereby. He everywhere distributes gall, and if I may endure in this condition yet another three days one will perhaps behold me burst into flames in the streets. I am already so dry that, touching me, the slightest spark would destroy me. Prevent this accident, madame. Come to him who cannot come to you. Alas, he is bold, a very Samson, who does not fear to die smothered beneath the ruins of his own palace, providing that he may crush in falling those who keep him from embracing you. Reflect that Nature, in giving to you the power to wound me, has shackled you by the leg lest you should carry away in your flight the remedy which you owe to me. And these wounds of mine are not imaginary, for direct me, I implore you, to one part of your body at which I may gaze without being smitten

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with this invisible fever which has assailed me? Is there one atom of your flesh which would not be guilty of my death if I should find it beautiful? You seem to me to be an agreeable hedgehog which will not suffer one to escape from one spine without causing one to fall upon others. Your brow flatters me, your eyes make me promises, your mouth smiles upon me, but my evil fortune, forbidding me to hope, supervenes to bar my way. Put down, for love of me, this barbarian. [His evil fortune.] Do not suffer a blind thing filled with malice to triumph over your goodness. Your face says to me, "Yes"; this cruel creature says, "No." Will she cause you to lie, the slut? She could not, if you did not so desire. How would she be confounded, and I be made how happy, if I should receive from your own hand that benefit which so ill-favoured a person could not hope to secure save by her mad caprice! For I would be obliged to you rather than to my enemy. In the meantime I am between you, looking now to you, now to her, and I ask myself with tears which of you will show me the better countenance. I hope it of you and for what reason I cannot say save that you are beautiful. I expect it of her for I cannot be reconciled with her unless she bestows upon me pleasures as great as have been those pains which she has dealt me. Oh,

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gods, how ill-assured is our happiness when it lies in the power of a girl and of Fortune! But should both of you neglect to cure me I shall have recourse to the Physician of All Great Ills, Death. Yes, I shall die. Perhaps, then, my disaster will soften you. Perhaps you will be more sensible to the arrows of death than to those of love, and that, one day when you are asked who I was, you will add to the tears which Humanity will demand that you shed, some little queasiness of the stomach in memory of one who so greatly loved you. Ah, if this good luck should but accompany my ashes, how lightly would rest upon them the stones of my tomb! How anxiously would they await the world's last day! How gladly would they arise to go before the Tribunal to testify to my life! But I shall go, in any case. I shall complain of your barbarity, I shall ask of God that He render me justice upon you. He will condemn you to burn below the earth for I do burn upon it. In the meantime be warned by this, madame, against so rigorous a sentence. Rather, let us burn with love! So sweet is its flame, no one has died of it. Would you share it more gratefully with another rather than with me, who am so solicitous lest I injure you? Since I am

YOUR SERVANT.

After some thought, and with tears of pride in his eyes, pride in this very genuine declaration of his love, De Bergerac signed his initials D. C. to it, since he considered De Cyrano softer of syllable than his Gascon title, and sent it to the Marais. He sent many such, all, he sincerely believed, little masterpieces. And yet for a time there came to him no adequate response. It was unlikely that she had objected to his simile of the agreeable hedgehog or deemed the mention of an upset stomach as a result of bereavement to be excessive or lacking in taste, since such terms were strictly in fashion. Her failure to yield to his advances remained completely cryptic. He came, after a month of this, seriously to contemplate ravishing the girl when, as inexplicably as hitherto, she had ignored him, she summoned him to a tête-à-tête.

He went, his blood pounding, trembling with excitement. In the entresol he encountered Luillier. He stiffened, and for an instant his rage was such that he had half drawn his sword when Luillier, with a gesture, indicated that he was unarmed.

"Monsieur, I did not think to find you here, or for that matter, any other man."

Luillier looked at him kindly. "Monsieur, I am taking my leave. Mademoiselle is an old

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friend, and I have been paying my compliments." He went away and Monsieur de Bergerac was presently conducted to his lady's chamber.

He found her abed.

It was the custom. In that day gallants frequently found their ladies abed and sat decorously beside until the conventional period of attendance was passed. Then they took leave of them with as much punctilio as though they were in their salons. Monsieur de Bergerac kissed the white hand that was given him and in a breath had paid five notable compliments. These compliments, prepared beforehand, were of course strongly reminiscent of the blue salon of the Divine Arthénice and so a little enigmatic to the lady who did not frequent the Hôtel Rambouillet. She heard, or believed that she heard, that her beauty was so major a force and her inclemency so devastating an agent of woe that Monsieur de Bergerac's eyes had been converted into two alembics in which she had distilled his very life's blood into water. Further, that so perfectly admirable were her qualities that these had wrought yet another conversion save that in the second case his life's blood had dripped from his pen's point in the guise of ink. This subtle reference to his unanswered letters caused her a

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qualm which she instantly corrected. Her coquetry, since he was at her knees, had been successful and should, therefore, not be regretted. Also, it seemed that though her attractions were such that she reigned over mankind as dominant a power as the sun in the solar system, she had allowed one poor planet to spin in darkness for more than a month. The singular brilliance of her countenance had sent her slave in blindness to the hospital of the Quinze-Vingts. More, he had forfeited his opportunity to rise with Gabriel's Trumpet, since, once dead, a victim to her cruelty, he had arisen at her bidding.

She listened to this with tolerance and remembered that, no doubt in an unguarded moment, Luillier had told her that this Gascon comic was wealthy. Luillier had observed that he had had this information from his son. She was in need of a protector who would preserve some routine in the matter of her wages and, as far as human mind could tell, she had now found him. Therefore, when Monsieur de Bergerac had made an end to his speeches, she shrugged her shoulders a little, charmingly, so that the lace bed mantle that she wore flutteringly disclosed breasts which were undeniably exquisite, and opened her arms.

Monsieur de Bergerac had, in the days of his doggedly riotous youth, known many wenches,



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Catauts, Margots, Fanchons, Nichons, and their simple-minded like, and it was only his own insistence upon an ideal that prevented in his mind an impulse of immediate comparison. His lady, to his subconscious astonishment, proved to be an adept in love, as was natural since, from the tender age of sixteen years, she had possessed Luillier for master.

Nevertheless, though it was inevitable that he should, after his first assignation, be disillusioned upon the subject of her gentility and position in society, Monsieur de Bergerac continued for a month or two as her lover and did not permit a day to pass without seeing her or writing to her. Thus, when she had failed to visit him at his lodgings, he lamented in this wise:

“I only half see you because I love you too much, and you think that you see me too much because you only half love me. Come to me presently, if you wish to give the lie to my fear of never seeing you again. Already one day has elapsed since we have been together. One day, good God! Ah, I must not believe lest I resolve to die. Do you imagine, then, that you have sufficiently fixed your picture in my heart that you may hereafter depend upon it to fulfil the promises that you have made to me? True, it is there

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and excellently limned, but I dare not place it before my eyes because I am aware that I must withdraw it from my heart and I am not sure that I may replace it without your assistance. I now see too well that I am not the Sun as you have often told me, for the dials do not agree with my account of the hours. I estimate more than a thousand since your cruel absence from my side. And in the meantime, you look at the clock merely to discover whether it is time to dine without caring whether or not the hour that you wish for be my last, or whether, when you come to me to give me your fine excuses, I shall be there to listen to them."

In reality, the fears which Monsieur de Bergerac affected to feel when his mistress did not come to him were purely imaginative and expressed only to exercise his pen. As the days went by it became increasingly evident that she had no intention of forsaking him, and it grieved him to observe that she had come to mix with her amorous ecstasies laments for the exigence of her creditors. She had the deplorable habit, even when lying in his arms, of declaring that, so poverty-stricken was she become, she would shortly be without a roof over her head. Monsieur de Bergerac finally realized with whom he

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had to deal and saw clearly that the girl was completely justified in this, since he had paid her nothing for her favours. Thereafter he gave her her wages, but his disillusionment was complete. That he had been so ridiculously blind in his idealism of this expensive little strumpet enraged him, and he meditated her dismissal. For besides the fact that his purse could not bear this strain upon it, the girl, though comely, was extraordinarily vicious, and her ardours had definitely affected his health. Briefly, one day when her demands had been more than usually inordinate, he made an end to the liaison and ascertained when she had left him that he would shortly be forced to have recourse once again to Monsieur de Mauvières.

Three days later he found it imperative to put himself under the care of Maître Élie Pigou, the surgeon, and to pay him 400 livres to restore to him his health.

He estimated that this adventure had cost a year's living and was plunged anew into an unfathomable melancholy.

Nothing, however, could keep him from his literary endeavours, and to Le Bret in Montauban he dispatched a lengthy epistle in rhyme in which he related all his woes. The self-portrait

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contained in the first stanza of this was dishearteningly accurate:

*“Cher Ami, je suis bien malade,
J’ai les yeux caves et battus,
La face terreuse et maussade,
Les genoux maigres et pointus;
Ceux qui me voient par la rue,
Plus jaune que vieille morue,
Canetter en amant fourbu,
Estiment que c’est la verolle
Qui me fait aller en bricolle,
Et m’enivre sans avoir bu.”*

He was, in a word, cast down both physically and mentally, and so he remained for some time.

And no sooner was he whole again than he outraged once again the bourgeois of the faubourgs who were only just forgetting the episode of Montfleury. Upon this occasion his passions drove him to a deed of violence which he bitterly regretted and further impeded the growth of any reputation save one for brawling. It happened that one afternoon, proceeding along the Quai des Augustins toward the Pont-Neuf, sunk in the abysmal murkiness of recent memories, he passed, as he had done a thousand times before, the Marionette Theatre of Brioché, an enter-

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tainer of local note well known on the Pont-Neuf. Brioché had a monkey no less well known than was he, answering to the name of Fagotin, and popularly regarded as the pride of the bridge and the chief attraction of its master's theatre. Fagotin was in every way accomplished and bore an extraordinary resemblance to Scarron, the Queen's Pensioner, a crippled little glutton equipped with a nimble and lascivious wit, and who was among the leaders of the gourmands and a friend to Monsieur de Bergerac's own friends. This resemblance had always fascinated Monsieur de Bergerac, and he had cultivated Fagotin, presenting him with oranges and observing sympathetically or with agreeable laughter the ape's monologues on and mimicry of Brioché. But on this particular afternoon Brioché had dressed Fagotin as a cavalier, given him an ancient hat with a draggled plume to it, a little cape of ragged velvet and breeches of the same, and a sort of cut-down small sword. In this guise Fagotin was irresistible and, at the moment when Monsieur de Bergerac was come near to him, was surrounded by lacqueys who were inspecting him with delight and prodding him to immoderate fooleries. At the sight of Monsieur de Bergerac they broke at once into mockery.

"Tiens, Fagotin's father!" shouted one. *"They*

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even go clothed in each other's cast-off habits."

"Do not insult Fagotin. *Hola*, monsieur, is that your nose of everyday?"

"Be off, monsieur. Your nose obstructs my vision!"

And so on, thereby securing the usual effect, for at once Monsieur de Bergerac drew and came down upon them at a run. Instantly, screaming with mirth, they fled, and when he was come up to where they had been standing, Monsieur de Bergerac's blood-drenched eyes saw nothing but a sort of diminutive gallant who thrust at him with his sword and blasphemed in a patois unknown to him. In a second it was all over. Fagotin, perceiving a friend, died expecting an orange instead of the steel that clove him, and Monsieur de Bergerac, his vision clearing, gathered the poor tragic little mummer into his arms and bawled his grief and remorse like a child.

This business made a great stir, and though Brioché was well paid and Fagotin escorted to a grave in the garden of Monsieur de Bergerac's own lodgings by the best known of the Libertins, the bourgeois were not appeased. From defeating an army at the Porte de Nesle this insensate Gascon had so far declined in courage as first to cut the buttons from a buffoon and then to assassinate a monkey at whom even his late Majesty

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had been pleased to laugh. It was too much, and had any of them dared they would have beaten him to death with sticks and thrown him into the Seine, but none wished to try conclusions in person, and bullies for the purpose were impossible to hire. Among men of the sword it was far from certain that Monsieur de Bergerac had grown a coward, and so the matter was in time forgotten.

But in the public consciousness, Monsieur de Bergerac had become fabulous. He was an abnormality, half lion, half mad dog. He was a great hero, but one who wore about his neck a necklace composed of more than one hundred little fingers cut from the men whom he had slain. It was said that in Flanders he had outraged a thousand girls, including nuns, and afterward forced them to own the Devil as their god. Since the burning of Grandier, convicted of introducing libidinous demons into the cubicles of cloistered holy women, was still recent, this last myth might well have worked real mischief. And there were others, some confected to increase his credit, but the majority to do him harm. Condé had been seen to weep because De Cyrano de Bergerac had refused to receive a regiment from his hands. Turenne had implored him to advise him upon his campaigns. Gassion had

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never recovered from his refusal to be of his tail, and so on, into the rarest atmosphere of fiction. Then, of course, he was a sodomist, a priest beater, a defiler of churches and the rest. Combined, all these intelligences composed a formidable legend. But this legend had nothing whatever to do with any fame in the world of letters.

In the year '46, after conversing with Chapelle upon the subject of patronage and the impossibility of creating beauty without being obliged to another's munificence, Monsieur de Bergerac paid another visit to the Faubourg Saint-Jacques and obtained an additional 1,000 pistoles. He found Monsieur de Mauvières in precarious health and no longer strong enough to refuse his demands. Zabeth he did not see, but he suspected her presence, and also that she was waiting impatiently for the old man to die so that she might be the first to select from his belongings.

He waited therefore upon his brother, and it was decided between them that one or the other would inspect the paternal household at least once a week.

They did so, and came to pity their father, who confided to them that since he had taken to his bed the Descourtieux had pillaged the house. Her depredations came finally to be so monstrous

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that in the summer of 1647 Monsieur de Bergerac removed from the Rue de Tournon and for the first time since his boyhood was installed beneath his father's roof. In January, 1648, at the instance of Monsieur de Mauvières himself, all his valuables were placed under seal and given into the hands of a trustee, Jacques Stopar, a brother-in-law, husband to his sister Anne.

On January 18, 1648, Abel de Cyrano, Sieur de Bergerac and de Mauvières, trespassed this life and was buried two days later in the Church of Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas. There were present at the ceremony a great number of family connections, chiefly Belanger, Le Maire, into whom the Guisard Savinien de Cyrano had married, Marcy, Doussin, Genne, and De Serquevillé, into which last two families the two brothers of Monsieur de Mauvières had married. Also, there were present, out of respect to their wives, the husbands of Monsieur de Bergerac's two sisters Marie and Anne, Messieurs Jean de Serre and Charles de Poussebotte. These gentlemen hoped now to share in their father-in-law's inheritance and declared candidly that their legacies should be substantial. They had received no dowers with their brides and cherished grievances. Their wives, who had been no more than children when their brother Savinien had severed his connec-

tion with the household, failed to awaken any emotions in Monsieur de Bergerac. They were, quite typically, bourgeois of the faubourgs, and they, in their turn, shunned him as the black sheep of their family and affected to consider his presence tactless under the circumstances.

Nevertheless, it was his presence that filled the church, for every townsman and townswoman in the district was there, not to do honour to the memory of the dead but to gaze upon Leviathan.

When the will was read, it was disclosed that the possessions of the late Sieur de Mauvières were, with the exception of a small legacy to Elizabeth Descourtieux, to be divided equally between his surviving children, but that the sum of 4,000 pistoles was to be subtracted from the sharing of his son Savinien, and 3,000 from that of his son Abel, and that the resulting 7,000 pistoles should be equally divided between his daughters, Mesdames de Serre and de Pousse-motte. The house in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques passed into the possession of Abel II, de Cyrano, Sieur de Mauvières.

Messieurs de Serre and de Pousse-motte considered this will to be just. In point of fact, his primogeniture entitled De Mauvières to a far different inheritance, but he had long ago ceased to complain of his father's sense of justice. Mon-

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sieur de Bergerac received 10,500 livres and believed himself provided for during the remainder of his life. He saw to it that the chest in which were contained his mother's garments was taken note of by his brother, gave him the key to it, and when the perfunctory farewells were said between himself and his sisters, departed with relief from the Faubourg Saint-Jacques. He had not felt so sound in spirits for five years. His disfavour with the bourgeois, Montfleury, his disastrous liaison, Fagotin, all were forgotten. And as he had 10,500 livres he no longer required a patron.

A few days later he learned from his brother that the Descourtieux had disappeared, not only with her legacy of 300 livres, but with the equivalent of twice that amount in plate.

"My poor friend," had observed Monsieur de Bergerac at this intelligence, "you are fortunate. Had you by mischance swallowed a gold piece in her presence she would have found a way to secure it, and to be eventrated by Zabeth would not, I can assure you, have been pleasant."

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Chapter xii

THE IMPIOUS PEN

The *Pedant Made Game Of*, a farce in five acts and forty-three scenes, by Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac, was written in three weeks' time in the spring of the year 1648 and was the first significant fruit of his financial independence. In it, limned with a healthy but brutal satire, Jean Grangier, one-time principle of the College of Beauvais, postures now absurdly as a sort of quack savant stuffed with tags and misapplied wisdom, and now indecently as Pantaloon, grown old and hideous in lust.

Monsieur de Bergerac did not even trouble to mask adequately his revenge upon his ancient

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dominie. In the play, Grangier is Granger, and the scene of his activities the College of Beauvais. The author's only regret was that his victim had been dead for five years when the disposition of circumstance permitted him finally to achieve his long-cherished project of a play in the manner of Quevedo.

The plot of this comedy which was to recommend him to the attention of posterity is unsubtle, but the lines are all of them joyous, and the fashion of Granger's perpetual discomfiture excellent if brutal fooling. The characters are ten: Granger; Châteaufort, a ruffling Rodomont drawn doubtless from any one or all of the most notorious bullies of the day, Fontenay Coup-d'Épée, La Chapelle Coup-de-Cannon, and the Chevalier de Miraumont; Mathieu Gareau, a rich rustic and, in point of dramatic value, the most significant characterization of the piece, since Monsieur de Bergerac was the first dramatic author to introduce the peasant upon the French stage, and excelled in his portraiture his imitators even to the measure of Molière; De la Tremblaye, a gentleman in love with the Pedant's daughter; Charlot Granger, son to the Pedant; Corbinelli, the picaro-valet to Charlot; Pierre Paquier, a sort of Pedant minimus and hanger-on; Fleury, cousin to the Pedant; Manon, daugh-



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ter to the Pedant; and Genevoté, sister to De la Tremblaye and in love with Charlot. Corbinelli, in whose rascally composition the influence of De Bergerac's admired Spaniards is most clearly seen, is the mainspring of the plot, which is resolved in the following manner:

Granger desires Genevoté and purposes to send his son abroad in order to rid himself of a rival, for Genevoté loves Charlot. Charlot disappears with Corbinelli, who returns shortly to inform the Pedant, in a famous scene, that his son has been captured by a Turkish galley in the Seine, and, unless ransomed with 100 pistoles, will be slain. Granger's lament, composed chiefly of repetition of that well-known question, "What the devil was he to do in that galley?" does nothing to make Corbinelli repent of his lie, and when Granger has given him the ransom this is employed to allow Charlot and Genevoté to be married. Châteaufort and De la Tremblaye press, in the meantime, their suit for Manon, but the Pedant will have none of them and favours Gareau, the rich peasant. De la Tremblaye is in despair when Granger's own lust for Genevoté, of whose devotion to Charlot he knows but little, puts a weapon into his hands. Genevoté gives the Pedant an assignation in her bedroom to which he must climb by ladder, and informs her brother

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of the hour. Thus, when the Pedant is upon his precarious way to his mistress, De la Tremblaye shouts "Thief!" below him and threatens to have his life. Granger appeals to Châteaufort to save him, and Monsieur de Bergerac's contempt for the professional duellist is completely discovered to the world by his scathing exposure of Châteaufort as a braggart, a poor shotten fellow who suffers himself to be beaten and kicked before the very eyes of the woman he professes to adore. In the end Granger is forced to consent to De la Tremblaye's marriage to Manon and, to consummate the Pedant's woe, Genevoté disabuses him, enumerates her reasons for finding him a figure of loathsome ridicule, and is bedded as the bride of Charlot.

So is the Pedant made game of, and though the play was not actually produced until the year of Monsieur de Bergerac's death it circulated for years in manuscript and was admired not only by the Libertins but by a young man of genius who rifled it to serve his needs. When in 1671 Molière wrote and played *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, men beheld, as Scene XI, in the second act of that farce, Monsieur de Bergerac's galley scene between Corbinelli and Granger, and marvelled at the candour of the plagiarism. When they spoke

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their wonderment, however, to the author-actor-manager, he who had once been no more than that little Poquelin with the poor digestion and Jesuitical training observed that he took his own where he found it; a remark that, naturally enough, led some to believe that he had collaborated with Monsieur de Bergerac. Probably, since Poquelin was passably honest as an artist, he meant that he took whatever he needed to improve his work, regardless of what mind had first fashioned it, but it is doubtful whether he would have done so if his one-time friend had been alive. Monsieur de Bergerac, not overly scrupulous himself in such matters, had insisted, nevertheless, on his own protection, and his sword had always been half-drawn in order to defend his pen.

The Pedant Made Game Of caused its author inextinguishable laughter, and he bitterly deplored the untimely passing of Granger's prototype. He cherished the perfectly sincere opinion that his farce was the most diverting contribution to French drama ever made, and was reinforced in this by the dicta of D'Assoucy, Tristan, and others who found it delectable because it seemed to contain satirical portraits of all their enemies. True, it lacked a Jesuit, but Granger might be ridiculed as Garasse, he who had always been

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their enemy, without too incredible a stretch of the imagination.

This play was, however, only the prologue to Monsieur de Bergerac's serious literary endeavour. He had for some time been interested in the imaginative writings of men who, in order that they might enjoy unlimited scope for philosophical speculation, had invented new worlds or transported their characters to the Moon or Sun. Preoccupied now for more than five years with the teachings of Gassendi, and a little taken with Cartesian doctrines, it was in De Bergerac's mind to add to this type of literature and by so doing be able to discourse as he would upon the evils of an oppressive clergy and an inquisition dedicated to the prevention of free thought. What Gassendi and Descartes professed in constant fear of the Church, Monsieur de Bergerac intended to discourse upon, after his own fashion, in untrammelled freedom, since his societies and administrations would be imaginative and so not subject to persecution. For his guidance in the construction of such a work he had many texts at his disposal. Lucian, Erasmus, and Thomas Moore, Rabelais, Montaigne, and the lamented Vanini, had all of them written in this wise. There were Campanella's *City of the Sun* and informative treatises by Giordano Bruno, Keppler, his

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beloved Quevedo, and Wilkins, whose *New World* had been published in France in 1605. There was Charles Sorel's *Francion*, whose hero, Hortensius, cherished the project of concisely describing the inhabitants of the moon, and that very year of 1648 the Englishman Godwin's *Man in the Moon, or a Voyage Thither, by Domingo Gonsales* had been translated into French by Jean Beaudoin. A year earlier, in '47, Pierre Borel had published "a new discourse proving the plurality of worlds and that the stars are inhabited," and there were other if lesser volumes of similar inspiration. Monsieur de Bergerac, in his own work—one composed, when finally completed, of two major and three minor themes, *The States and Empires of the Moon*, *The History of the Republic of the Sun*, and *The Kingdom of the Birds*, *The Kingdom of the Trees*, and *The History of the Spark*—drew largely on Sorel and Beaudoin's translation of Godwin for the mechanics of his plan, but once launched, his talent cast off its guide ropes, and the matter that followed was the strict essence of his own original thought. The persecution by the clergy of most scholars, the dangerous terror of the common people for those whose wisdom seemed to render them suspect of sorcery, the venality of gaolers, the conflict between the respective jurisdictions

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of kings and their peoples, and the atrocious prison system in the kingdom of France were subjects all of which were touched upon, and not lightly, before Dyrcona, Monsieur de Bergerac's hero whose name is lucidly, even obviously anagrammatic, ever started for the moon. And once started, the manner of his going far excelled in ingenuity those of any of the models consulted. Dyrcona made use of no such device as a pair of wild swans harnessed to a wooden sledge, nor did he, seated in an iron chariot, propel himself skyward by continuously hurling into the air above him a lodestone attached to a rope. Monsieur de Bergerac, inventive to a degree unknown to the sciences of his age, furnished his explorative hero with what might be termed the first hot-air balloon and the first parachute. For Dyrcona sailed pleasantly moonward equipped with hermetically sealed jars of steam, which imprisoned element, expanding and tending to rise, caused the jars to rise with it. Placed beneath Dyrcona's armpits, these jars bore him to his destination, and at the proper time he cast them from him and drifted safely down upon the lunar surface, the uprushing air causing his long robe to billow out and so support him as he descended.

Further, Monsieur de Bergerac described, as

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a mechanism familiar to the moon, a device generally attributed to the genius of an American inventor living almost three centuries after his death, for witness the phonographic substitute for books as examined by Dyrcona: Each book a box, containing springs, wheels, and a needle, the whole like to clockwork, and the parts composing the words and chapters of the work in question. When the needle is adjusted at whatever place in the work desired, and the machinery set in motion, sounds are therefrom produced which relate the substance of the prose or poetry or drama, according to the nature of the work specified.

And this is not all. His interest in such mechanical phenomena did not divert Monsieur de Bergerac from his preoccupation with the sciences both of physiology and astronomy, and while not precisely definitive either of microbes, or of corpuscular organisms now familiar to learning, his words on "the little animals" which constitute, in a sort of living tissue, our flesh, our blood, and our brains, and which, by their lives and energies, endow us with ours, commended him less to contemporaries than to savants of a century later than was his. Touching astronomy, and in this regard it is interesting to observe that M. C. Flammarion, the great French astrono-

mer, considered him, two hundred and fifty-odd years later, to be the peer of Pythagoras, Galileo, and Keppler, he was no less instructive. He declared the attractive powers of the earth to exceed those of the moon as those of the sun surpassed those of the earth, and so approximated a conception of the solar system which was hardly admissible in his own day. That he admitted these powers at all was contrary to the thesis of Descartes, who sought to replace such a theory by one dealing with the activity of vortices, and insisted that space was but a mischievous abstraction.

When it was completed Monsieur de Bergerac's *Other World* was substantially the most significant work of its type of his generation and the philosophical temper of its satire did not escape Swift who, one day, pillaged Monsieur de Bergerac as Monsieur de Bergerac had pillaged Sorel and Godwin. But in the nature of its comparative arguments it was meat far too strong even for the toughest of the Libertins. Everywhere that Dyrcona travelled, whether on the sun or in the kingdom of the birds, mankind was reviled and mocked at and proved inferior to all other created things. The birds scorn Dyrcona, he is a man and therefore physically repulsive and of a base and servile nature. The



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doctors of the moon declare that men are brutes whom God has not deigned to form but whom He has allowed Nature to fashion as she would, and so are ridiculously furnished with two paws and a tiny head grotesquely inclined toward the sky. Upon the sun he is recognized as being a man because everyone knows that man is the most absurd of living things, a monster, a hairless animal, a naked fowl. And so it goes in a manner to deprecate God's handiwork in Eden, and so acutely subversive to Holy Writ.

When Monsieur de Bergerac showed his manuscript to his friends they were embarrassed and fearful lest they be thought to admire it. Le Royer de Prades returned it with six lines of bad doggerel which were frank to admit their author's terror in reading such heretical matter. D'Assoucy, who had not scrupled to ask his friend for a preface to his *Judgment of Paris*, blenched for fear that Monsieur de Bergerac might require that this compliment be returned, and Tristan, Saint-Amant, Chapelle, Linières, and Bachaumont, brave atheistical fellows at wenching or drinking, dyed-in-the-wool Libertins at debauch, shrank from writing congratulatory verses or forewords that actually might offend the Church.

So that the work was stillborn, and when fin-

ally published in March, 1657, two years after the death of its author, it was shortly placed upon the Index and suppressed. Before this blow fell, however, it had sold rapidly simply because it was thought to contain, as the astonished Bois-robert's bookseller informed him, "some beautiful impieties." This opinion, however, was in currency from the first, since the Libertins did not keep their amazement to themselves, and in 1648 the faubourgs rejoiced in the knowledge that De Bergerac, the maniac atheist, had so declared himself in writing. Thus, Monsieur de Bergerac succeeded finally in establishing his literary reputation only to find himself more hated by the bourgeois than ever was Théophile and perfectly liable to clerical persecution.

This verdict of the faubourgs he spat upon, but that his friends had not supported him conclusively destroyed in him all further desire for social contact of any sort whatever. The fact that the Libertins avoided discussion of his book determined him to break with them, and it did not occur to him that the events which swamped Paris and France from 1648 to 1652 had distracted the attention of men who might otherwise have publicly congratulated him on his achievement even while fearing to be identified with its distribution. The Fronde, with its multiplex

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implications of rebellion and civil war, cast all other and lesser considerations out of mind, a fact his realization of which Monsieur de Bergerac's egotism for a time forbade. And it was not only the Libertins who saw in the popular hatred of Mazarin, in the general distrust of the Queen-Regent, in the arrest of Broussel, the Court's evasion of Paris and Condé's victory over the Parisians at Charenton, matters of more interest than the success or failure of a friend's book. Even sober scholars like Gui Patin sang Mazarinades, those scurrilous ditties against the Cardinal loosed daily in dozens upon the city, gossipped of Gondy's brawl with "Ami Franchise" as he called the Prince de Marsillac, or speculated upon Mademoiselle's quarrel with the Court. Men of dignity gazed like children at the mounted cavalcades of the great Frondist nobles, Longueville, Conti, Bouillion, and the comely Beaufort, as they filled the narrow streets with pageantry, and, like children, ran to see the latter duke, his golden curls tumbling upon his shoulders, play at tennis in the Halles.

Monsieur de Bergerac was forgotten in all this, and that he was so ignored savagely chagrined him. He determined finally to join in the tumult, and though without cause for hatred of Mazarin, published in his turn a Mazarinade,

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"The Minister of State Purged by Fire," in 392 lines of scarcely tolerable monotony, unworthy both of his talent and his character. Then because Scarron, the little cripple, dared not attack the Cardinal lest he lose his pension from the Queen, he, who had once liked Scarron, who had used him always with courtesy, turned on him in a clever but unforgivably cruel satire and so lost a valuable friend. Suddenly, as though he had succumbed to a mania which compelled him to quarrel with his most trusted intimates, he broke with Chapelle, whom he accused of plagiarism, and made the charge public in a furious epistle. He refused to seat himself at a table with Lin-ières, saying that the youth was a piss-a-bed fellow who had abused his hospitality. He called Tristan a liar to his face and, when the poet objected, threatened to pour him back into the wine cask from which, he declared, his onetime friend had been poured into the world. And finally, he fell upon D'Assoucy, whose bewilderment was so great that he thought the thing a jest and could give no reason for Monsieur de Bergerac's anger save that possibly he had refused to share with him the gift of a capon from Mans. D'Assoucy, poor glutton, had, he realized too late, never really known Monsieur de Bergerac at all. He fled Paris, unable to understand what had be-

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fallen him, save that the duellist had threatened to kill him on sight. Only Henri Le Bret remained unoffended, and Le Bret, loyal and devoted as he was, Monsieur de Bergerac refused to see because Le Bret had not always approved of his way of life.

Daily he became more erratic, and when Scarron, deprived of his pension in spite of his silence, joined the Frondists, he sought to buy back his Mazarinades and became the Italians' champion. He mocked at Scarron's deformity, saying "Run, seditious people, to behold a spectacle worthy of the justice of God! It is the frightful Scarron, who is given to you for an example of the agony to be suffered in hell by Ingrates, Traitors, and the calumniators of their Princes."

And so matters proceeded for four years.

Monsieur de Bergerac was become, at the end of this period, so markable an Ishmael that Messieurs de Cuigy, de Bourgogne, and de Brisailles, inquiring for him at the Croix de Lorraine, learned that he was a madman homicidally inclined and went their way sorrowfully, believing that he was in durance.

He had, before engaging upon his great work upon the other world, dallied with the project of a tragedy in the classical manner, *The Death of*

Agrippina and he completed it slowly, hopelessly, believing it his destiny to die unappreciated. Rotrou and Corneille had reaped in the same field, the former *Diocletian*, the latter *Horace* and *Cinna*. Even Tristan had written a *Death of Seneca*, and Boisrobert, grown lean since the death of the great Cardinal-Duke, Du Ryer and Scudéry, had tried their hands. Monsieur de Bergerac's tragedy is superior to those of all save Corneille, but during the years of the Fronde none saw it since none dared to speak to its author. Lean, unkempt, his eye wild and his nose snuffling the air for any opportunity for violence, he held communion with no one, and his works never left his chambers to circulate among the wits.

And these wits, the Libertins who had once been his comrades, did not fail to revenge themselves as they could for his attacks upon them. D'Assoucy, from his transalpine refuge, described him as almost bald, with hairs so few that they might have been counted at ten steps; with legs like spindles and a neck so scrawny that his gullet shook a little; and, while not precisely dirty, yet shod always in shoes incrustated with the mud in which they were constantly planted. Saint-Amant declared that his poor lame verses had blisters upon their feet from

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wandering in the streets, and Tristan affected to believe that he was the Wandering Jew. Chappelle, whose true gentility of soul forbade such methods of retaliation, said nothing, but in this he was singular. Monsieur de Bergerac, for years wished ill by the bourgeois, was now and by his own choice cast out by those of whom he had once made one.

Bachaumont, who had followed the Court, returned with it to Paris from Saint-Germain and, ignorant of all this, sought out his old friend in his chambers in the Rue de Tournon. He found him, clad in an ancient dressing gown, sombrely inspecting his fireplace in which no fire burned. To Bachaumont's greetings he returned nothing, and to his invitation to join him in a mild debauch with fellow Libertins, he howled suddenly while tears stood in his eyes: "Do you speak to me of friends? Why, you fool, I rid myself of such vermin long ago. Friends, Blood of God! Reptiles who ignore the work of a man's life, sneer at it, foul it with envy, and steal from it to glorify themselves. Friends? Why, look you! Let me come face to face with one of these friends and be witness to my embraces. I'll have his guts waving from my point like ribbons before your mouth is opened to shout swords!"

Appalled, Bachaumont fled. Incontestably,

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Monsieur de Bergerac was mad, and when he told his friends of this encounter both Tristan and Saint-Amant declined to sit late at wine and preferred to go home promptly, while yet the streets were filled.

Chapter xiii

DISILLUSIONMENT

IN THE spring of the year 1652 Monsieur de Bergerac resolved, however, to attempt a last sally in quest of contented ambition. He had plumbed the depths of his bitterness against life, and inevitably the pendulum of his humours swung him upward again so that he no longer shrank from facing those circumstances that governed his existence. He recognized that he had alienated the Libertins and that excepting only Le Bret, and his brother, Cyrano de Mauvières, whom he never saw, he was without a comrade in Paris. And he was thirty-three, prematurely aged by disappointments, and beginning now to

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feel the effect of the two wounds that he had received while following the wars. His purse, too, had once again grown lean, for in the days before he had broken with the Libertins he had spent his share in payment of debauches, and during the Fronde had caused his pamphlets and Mazarinades to be published and distributed at his own expense. Resolutely, for he now counted personal independence to be a vanity no more essential to his life than were the love of women or the companionship of friends, he decided to seek out a patron whose influence would protect him from enemies and whose funds from indigence. Such a patron would be, he realized, not easy to find since Gassion was dead, and the enmity of Candale and De Grammont unforgotten at the Louvre. In the end, after much bitter reflection upon his folly in turning the minds of all men against him, he swallowed the last remnant of his pride and joined the household of Louis, duc d'Arpajon.

This nobleman, despite a very honourable career of arms, was the jest of his day, a well-meaning buffoon whom even D'Assoucy would have avoided, lest his friends banish him with laughter from their company. Comte de Rodez, Marquis de Severac, Viscomte de Montal, Baron de Salvagnac, Montclar, and other lands, he was

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a member of the Grand Council, lieutenant general of the King in Languedoc, duke by brevet and with justifiable aspirations to achieve the bâton. Enormously wealthy, he lived in town and in his castles as splendidly as did, fifteen years later, the magnificent Fouquet, and he desired to be known as a patron of the arts because he had heard that the Great Alexander had once honoured the genius of Pindar. Yet his ignorance of letters was so profound that he was the butt of the wits, who attended his banquets, guzzled his meats and wines, and laughed in his face when he solicited their dedications. Wishing one day to compliment Sarrasin, the protégé of the crooked Conti, he had said to him, "Ah, monsieur, how much I love your 'Springtime.' "

Sarrasin, chatting with Pellisson, had responded rudely, though the man was his host, "I did not write it. It is a thing of Montplaisir's."

Undaunted, the duke had persevered. "Ah, your 'Temple of Death' is admirable!"

"It is by Habert, the Commissioner of Artillery."

Panting with anxiety, the King's lieutenant general in Languedoc had, under the poet's impudent gaze, vainly racked his brains for another title until Pellisson, seized with pity for him, had mentioned the "Sonnet of Eve."

Such was the Mæcenat to whom Monsieur de Bergerac offered the services of his pen. Arpajon received him with open arms, caused him to be newly tailored, plied him with food at all hours, and kept watch over his genius as though he were a farmer gorging a penned goose for its liver. When he took leave of Paris for his estates his man-of-letters accompanied him and spent his days wandering forlornly about endless corridors, listlessly examining family portraits by the Clouets and astonishingly flattering conceptions of the present Arpajon by Philippe de Champagne. His desire to write had suddenly and inexplicably left him when he was come at last to a safe haven, and the routine of his days seemed to extinguish in his mind the last spark of inspiration. Monsieur le duc, as time passed, and there were produced no masterpieces dedicated to the protector of the arts who was also a warrior only less glorious than Condé, became alarmed. He questioned his protégé and learned with gratification that he had a tragedy, lately completed, which would reflect honour upon both authors and patron if it might be produced. It seems regrettably certain that Monsieur de Bergerac very well knew that there were contained in *The Death of Agrippina* lines to which the author's established notoriety as an atheist might lend a

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temper more than ordinarily offensive, but since Arpajon desired the credit for the presentation of a classical tragedy Monsieur de Bergerac determined that he should have it. Besides which, his patron had only to read the play to decide for himself upon its fitness for the Hôtel de Bourgogne. The manuscript was, therefore, put into the hands of the duke, and its author awaited his verdict with the utmost indifference. He was now so well convinced of his inability to secure a popular following that whether his tragedy was performed or remained unproduced forever was to him no longer a matter of moment.

Nevertheless, he was astonished when Arpajon reported to him that his tragedy was a work of genius and that, suitably dedicated, it would shortly be performed by Floridor's troupe at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Floridor had succeeded Bellerose in the direction of this theatre, after acquiring a great reputation at the Theatre of the Marais. To this intelligence De Bergerac could make no suitable reply save that it was his dearest wish that Monsieur le duc should be gratified. He had a suspicion of which he was momentarily ashamed until he examined his manuscript before suffering it to be copied. Two pages of the first act, and thereafter every third page, had been stuck to its fellow, as he had casually

ascertained before submitting it to his patron. The moisture that had been no stranger in his lodgings in the Rue de Tournon had caused this mischief, and he had hoped that Monsieur le duc would not harm the pages as he plucked them apart. Monsieur le duc had not harmed the pages. He had not attempted to pluck them apart. In fact, Monsieur le duc had not read *The Death of Agrippina*.

Monsieur de Bergerac shrugged his shoulders.

The Death of Agrippina went into rehearsal and opened at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in 1653. Tiberius was played by the elder Baron, of Bellerose's old troupe. Sejanus was excellently enacted by Floridor himself. De Villiers was cast as Nerva; Beauchâteau, old comrade of Mondory and Montfleury, as Terentius; the Valliot as Agrippina; and Livilla was interpreted by either Beauchâteau or De Villiers, according to their required appearances in Livilla's scenes. If, for an example, Nerva was required by the script to be on the stage with Livilla, Beauchâteau played Livilla, since Terentius was off-stage.

The plot, in which Monsieur de Bergerac conceived of Agrippina as enlisting Sejanus, favourite of Tiberius, to aid her in avenging her husband Germanicus, is resolved by her intrigue

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with Sejanus, her intention to destroy both him and Tiberius, Livilla's passion for the favourite and her plan to destroy Agrippina, the infatuation of Sejanus for the woman who intends his death, and in the end, the death of Sejanus, who had conspired against his master, and that of Agrippina, the woman who has caused him to do so. The considerations of history did not hamper Monsieur de Bergerac, and he in no sense intended a factually accurate drama, though it is noteworthy that his adaptation of the tragedies of the Julians is far more deft than that of any contemporary save, as has been observed, Corneille. The character of Sejanus was his most powerful creation and that one upon which he had concentrated his chief attention. Through the mouth of the favourite of Tiberius he was implicit upon the subject of his philosophical opinions, his faith in destiny, his contempt for death, which is nothing since nothing follows death, and his irreverent attitude toward God. Sejanus served as Monsieur de Bergerac's megaphone through which he trumpeted his defiance to the clergy and his scorn for the bourgeois who dared not express an opinion upon eternity save it had been censored by the priest.

He had not the slightest doubt but that some

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of the lines spoken by Floridor in this part would awaken whistles, but he could not foresee that a speech entirely guiltless of any taint of suspected blasphemy should shatter forever his chance for a public success.

Upon the night of the opening he sat in the box of Monsieur le duc, who leaned upon his arm and saluted everyone of importance in the house as though accepting in advance the congratulations of the town. The pit was crowded with men and women who stood on tiptoe, hands to purses for fear of thieves, ogling the stage, and the chairs and boxes were all occupied. Beyond the candles, facing the house and sitting so negligently that there was scarce space enough upon the boards for the actors, sat the young nobles who esteemed themselves amateurs of the drama. The din of talk was insistent and cut through every minute by the cry of "Portugal! Portugal!" from the orange peddlars, and "Here is ladies' pleasure, here is pleasure!" from the vendors of gingerbread. The lanterns and the stage candles smoked, the smell of garlic and sweat rose in slow waves from the pit to war triumphantly with the perfumes with which the ladies in the boxes drenched their breasts and shoulders, the guards at the door shouted pleasant words to the oyster wenches, and the Hôtel



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de Bourgogne was ready for De Cyrano de Bergerac's classical tragedy.

It commenced.

The first act was received in silence except for the plaudits of Arpajon, who understood little of Agrippina's lament for Germanicus but found the Vaillot very fine. The audience, long instructed upon the subject of Monsieur de Bergerac's atheism and fast believers in the legend of his duels and ogreish violences, listened carefully for the inevitable blasphemies and bided its time. Monsieur de Bergerac merely sat and waited. The second act opened, proceeded, was concluded, having, in the fourth scene, discovered to the audience a most notable example of that for which they waited. Sejanus, in reply to Terentius, who bids him respect the thunderbolts of the gods, observes coolly that these never fall to earth in winter and that, therefore, he has another six months in which to mock the gods, after which he will make his peace with them.

Monsieur de Bergerac, as Floridor did full justice to these lines, eased his rapier so that it lay comfortably across his knees and awaited the tumult. It did not come. The majesty and occasionally the great beauty of his couplets had captured the audience, and he knew his countrymen well enough to realize that thereafter Sejanus

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might blaspheme to his heart's content, so he did so in melodious verses.

He relaxed and perceived that his patron was asleep, having vaguely expected a Pantaloon to relieve Sejanus, whom he found dull, and being a little disappointed at Agrippina's lack of vivacity. The third act was consistently applauded, and the fourth, until the fourth scene, punctuated by vehement declarations from the *banc formidable*, the formidable bench, upon which, in a sort of inclosure near the stage, sat fellow dramatists, critics, and writers of news letters, that De Cyrano de Bergerac was a greater than Corneille. Into the author's heart there had stolen a joy in which he hardly dared believe. Was he, then, to be at last a popular, a courted dramatist, a member, perhaps, of the Academy? And then came the fourth scene of the fourth act, a scene which a Jesuit novice might have written, a scene as unprejudicial to pious belief as a sermon by François de Sales. Sejanus, prepared to assassinate Tiberius, says to Livilla, "*Frappons, voilà l'hostie!*" "Let us strike, here is the victim," for the word *hostie* was regularly used as a poetical synonym for "victim," in Latin *hostia*.

As Floridor uttered these words there fell a great silence, while the pit, lulled until now by the

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splendour of the lines, recognized a word which for them meant but one thing, the Holy Sacrament. Instantly Monsieur de Bergerac the poet was forgotten and Monsieur de Bergerac the atheist remembered. Monsieur de Bergerac the blasphemer, bidding them to strike at the blood and flesh of the Christ. Someone whistled, and as Floridor left Livilla to her fourteen-line monologue, hurled after him the sucked remnant of an orange. In his box Monsieur de Bergerac prayed that the moment would pass, but he knew that it would not. Quite suddenly the pit erupted, turned toward him its corporate, distorted face, communicated its stupid fury to the chairs and, slowly, to the boxes. Floridor, tears in his eyes, stood waving his arms for silence until elbowed out of sight by the lordlings who lounged to the candles to examine the monster of impiety in the box of the King's lieutenant general in Languedoc. Arpajon, bewildered, shouted for his people, but Monsieur de Bergerac stood looking at this spectacle of uproar as indifferently as though it had been the play. He knew now how vain had been his brief hope for the applause of these insensate groundlings whom he had always loathed and studied to affront. Casually, and with a gesture of admirable insolence, he yawned. He shrugged his shoulders, then suddenly, in a

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swift access of intolerable fury, spat toward the pit. The howl that arose appeased him, and, leisurely, he drew his rapier, placed it beneath his arm, and walked out of the Hôtel de Bourgogne with his plumed hat upon his head and one hand playing gently with his delicate moustache.

Next day he heard without emotion that *The Death of Agrippina* had been forbidden the boards.

He continued in the household of Monsieur le duc, who never completely understood what had caused the riot and who still waited eagerly for dedications. To satisfy this childlike desire as well as to do something in return for his board and maintenance, Monsieur de Bergerac collected all his letters, his satires, and epigrams, and caused them, in company with *The Pedant Made Game of, The Death of Agrippina*, and a complimentary sonnet to Mademoiselle d'Arpajon, to be published in 1654 by Charles Sercy, as his various works. This volume he inscribed very gracefully to his patron, comparing him to Apollo and himself to an Athenian youth, offering, in honour of the god, the first creations of his brain to him who would judge them mercifully.

Monsieur le duc was delighted. He did not know that the works in which Monsieur de Ber-

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gerac took most pride, those dealing with the adventures of Dyrcona in other and better worlds than this, remained close among their author's valuables and might not be profaned either by eyes which could not read or by a wit which could not comprehend what it heard.

With this volume Monsieur de Bergerac considered his obligation to his Mæcenæ to be in some sort discharged. Thereafter he made no further pretense to be anyone but himself, a profoundly disappointed man immersed constantly in reflections all of which were melancholy.

Chapter xiv

ALL THINGS IN VAIN

IN THE early weeks of 1655 Messire Tanneguy Renault des Bois-Clairs, a town gentleman of substance and old blood, received a visit from his friend, the good bourgeois Henri Le Bret. Le Bret, after greetings, appeared to be greatly discomposed. "Monsieur," he said with some embarrassment, "I have come to ask of you a favour."

Messire Tanneguy said pleasantly, "It is granted."

Le Bret stammered something which Des Bois-Clairs did not catch.

"But certainly," he said,

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"It regards my great friend, my oldest friend, Savinien de Cyrano, Sieur de Bergerac," said Le Bret.

"Tiens?"

"He has, as doubtless you have heard, been seriously injured."

"I had not heard."

"Then, if you will permit me . . .?"

Des Bois-Clairs poured wine and composed himself to listen while Le Bret arranged his gown with nervous fingers. In his precise voice, a little dry, with its suspicion of lawyer's rhetoric, he said:

"Monsieur de Bergerac, though of late years we have not been as intimate as I could have wished, is my oldest friend. His life, as you may know, has been stormy and, I regret to say, godless. He has been, monsieur, a duellist, a man of violence and dissipations, a Libertin, and some say an atheist. But at bottom he is a brave heart, gentle, and inclined to virtue. He has been, monsieur, misled by mischievous spirits, who have, at this latter end of his youth, brought about what may be his destruction. Four days ago, while entering the Hôtel of Monsieur le duc d'Arpajon, he was struck down by a falling beam which came from no one yet knows where."

Des Bois-Clairs frowned.

"The Jesuits!" he said. "I recall a pamphlet by the hand of your friend accusing the Jesuits of attempting his assassination."

Le Bret seemed pained. "A delusion, monsieur. My poor friend suffered from delusions that the Church persecuted him. Besides, the Jesuits were far from being his only enemies."

"That is true. And the favour you wish to ask of me?"

"Monsieur, he lies now only barely conscious in the Hôtel d'Arpajon and is scarcely tended since Monsieur le duc has no use for sick poets who are unable to magnify his glory."

Des Bois-Clairs smiled.

"My favour is, monsieur, that you receive my friend for a little time under your roof until he be sufficiently recovered to resume his existence alone in his own lodgings, for he will under no circumstances consent to remain under the protection of a man who has not even troubled himself to discover whether he be dead or alive. I ask you this, monsieur, in the hope that your liberality will not permit an unfortunate gentleman to have recourse to the Hôtel Dieu, where, as you know, five thousand miserable souls are crowded into twelve hundred beds, and where the holy nuns with all their skill and care may not save alive more than one fifth of their patients."

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Des Bois-Clairs, a Frenchman and a man of heart, had tears in his eyes.

"Monsieur, your feeling for your friend does you honour. As for Monsieur de Bergerac, he is welcome to everything that I possess. I have long admired his courage, and I shall receive him under my roof with gratification."

So was Monsieur de Bergerac, suffering from concussion and in a condition of general physical collapse, translated from the position of house poet to D'Arpajon to that of being the welcome guest of Messire Tanneguy Renault des Bois-Clairs.

When he was restored to entire lucidity he himself believed for a time that an attempt had been made to assassinate him, though there were better ways of murdering a man than by climbing with a twelve-foot rafter to the precipitous roof of a Fifteenth Century hotel and then allowing the extraordinary missile to drop upon the head of the victim. Besides which no one had been seen upon the roof of the Hôtel d'Arpajon, and workmen had lately been at work there. Monsieur de Bergerac concluded finally that the matter, if explainable at all, had been accidental and thought no more about it. His mind was far too occupied with other things. He had no doubt but that he would not recover and he wished to

edit his manuscripts thoroughly so that, after his death, Le Bret might cause to be published a definitive edition of his works. The thought of dissolution troubled him not a whit and, like Théophile, he faced death without deserting even the least of the philosophical opinions which he had professed during his life. Death was nothing since for mankind there waited nothing after Death. As he had caused his Sejanus to believe, so he believed himself. With a tranquil mind, therefore, he lay abed, rereading his works, conversing upon letters with his host, and growing daily weaker, without anxiety or fear.

In his soul, he was more content than he had been for seven years, but this contentment was destined shortly to be shattered.

Le Bret was the cause of this. When his friend was become completely conscious and capable of receiving other visitors than his host, the good man came each day and sat for hours at the bedside of his poor Savinien, discoursing upon celestial joys and the great merit of timely repentance, oblivious to Monsieur de Bergerac's closed eyes and weary face, careless of the silence that greeted his exhortations, and intolerably zealous upon the subject of Grace. His languor forbade the invalid to rebel, though he murmured now and again the last words of Cosimo Ruggieri,

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that contemporary of his grandfather's, who had played astrologer to Catherine de' Medici. "Fools," the dying Florentine had observed to the Capuchins who sought his repentance, "go to! There are no devils save those who torment us in this life, and no gods save the kings and princes of this earth who can advance us and do us good."

But these impious declarations did not deliver him. Le Bret, dogged at argument, droned on until Monsieur de Bergerac screeched one day, unable to contain himself any longer: "Henri, I tell you finally; I am like Maurice of Nassau who bade a minister and priest to his deathbed and listened in agony to their monstrous arguments until he turned his face to the wall and died, saying that there was nothing certain in the universe save mathematics. Four and four make eight, as two and two make four. Beyond that, I believe nothing."

He turned his face to the wall.

It was in vain.

And worse was to follow.

One day, deep in his corrections and with a placid mind since Le Bret had left him untroubled for a time, the door of his room was opened and, without raising his eyes, he knew that his insufferable friend was once more come to bait him. He groaned feebly and put away

his papers. He looked up. Behind Le Bret stood two women, one in the robes of a sister of the Convent of the Daughters of the Cross, the other in garments equally drab, whose face was faintly familiar, though why Monsieur de Bergerac could not tell.

Let Bret smiled with an unction that to the invalid was absolutely appalling.

"Savinien, I have brought to you the very reverend Mother de Sénaux, called Marguerite of Jesus, of the Convent of the Daughters of the Cross."

He paused. "And your cousin, the gracious and pious lady whom you knew as the Baroness de Neuville." "

Savinien, among his pillows, lay like a man already dead. He knew the worst. The very reverend Mother, who had lost her teeth, preached to him and prayed in his behalf for two hours, after which Madeleine de Neuville, upon whose once lovely chin there did indeed grow hairs at which her cousin could not bear to look, prayed in his behalf and preached to him for yet another two. There followed them Le Bret, who spoke for three hours and concluded with a last perfervid exhortation to repent, raising his hands and demanding in a voice choked with tears caused by his own eloquence, "Savinien, my

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friend, my poor friend, let us pray together for your salvation!"

He received no response.

Monsieur de Bergerac was unconscious.

That night, when Messire Tanneguy Renault des Bois-Clairs paid his daily visit to his guest he found him mildly delirious and insistent that he dispatch a message at once to his cousin Pierre de Cyrano, son to his uncle Samuel de Cyrano, who lived a short distance from Paris, at Sannois. The message was sent, and Pierre de Cyrano travelled to town. There, in the presence of Des Boise-Clairs and his kinsman, Monsieur de Bergerac mustered his remaining strength to ask a last kindness of them both.

"Monsieur," he said to his host, "I am, as you can see, a man who has but a short time longer to live. You have been more than gracious to me, you have been my friend. But I wish to die in peace, and by my own misfortune I have converted your house into a penitential cell. I must leave it, monsieur, and allow you to enjoy it as you should, with laughter and joy, and not in an atmosphere of lamentation, of Misereres and Mea Culpas. My cousin, Monsieur de Cyrano, will shelter me for the remainder of my time, which, I can assure him, will not be long. Gentlemen, I ask you both to bear with me and my whims and

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to grant me the change of air which I feel will benefit me, believing me to be your servant, though, as such, unable to be anything save a burden upon my friends."

That evening he was transported to Sannois, and next day, when Le Bret, accompanied by the very reverend Mother de Sénaux, called Marguerite of Jesus, and the pious Madame de Neuville, presented himself at the house of Des Bois-Clairs, he was informed straightly that Monsieur de Bergerac was not in Paris and that Messire des Bois-Clairs was not at liberty to inform of his whereabouts.

So it was that Monsieur de Bergerac was allowed to die in peace, after completing the revision of his works and a recapitulation of his career. A true Libertin, and though he could not know it the last of them, he persevered in facing his extinction armed cap-a-pie in his philosophy, and having lived with his senses and his brain, he continued to the end in his belief in existence as the only universal reality and honourably took leave of it, scornful of an apostasy compelled by fear.

The offices of Le Bret and the two pious ladies whom he had enlisted in his assistance had been in vain.

Monsieur de Bergerac repented of nothing,

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neither the nights spent with Nichon or Cataut, with Marotte, Franchon, or Babé, nor the hours when, his mind inflamed with the pleasant toxics of old wines, he had propounded potent heresies and defended them with his sword. Wenching, wining, debauch, he recalled them all joyfully and without fear of a hereafter that was not to be. Wine had warmed his blood, desire had stirred it; wisdom and argument had inspired his brain, and conviction and imagination had impelled its powers. He had lived. Why, in the name of a God who was not, repent of it?

In this consistency of mind, however, Monsieur de Bergerac was alone among the men who had devoted their youth to an allegiance to Théophile and whose maturity had made of the Libertins a tangible menace to the Church. Tristan, it is true, dying in the same year with Monsieur de Bergerac, passed in the odour of extreme heresy, but Saint-Amant and the rest succumbed to doctrine revived under Louis the Great and took leave of life in a *bourdon* of half-remembered prayers. During the minority and the first years of the next reign, young bloods like Bussy-Rabutin, De Guiche, Manicamp, and Mancini, Duc de Nevers, might feast on fast days and mock at ecclesiastical and royal dignity by phrasing lampoons on kingly wenching in the scansion of

liturgic songs, but these too were not constant in skepticism and made all of them conventional exits. The libertinism of Monsieur de Bergerac was a thing of dignity, and its bases were not those of disrespect and unsober impertinence, but of some profundity of thought and rigid introspection. He was an honest thinker, an honest skeptic who could admit that he envied the faithful, but he died determined in his unbelief and his refusal of Christianity.

But, while he repented of none of those carnal misdemeanours so girded at by Le Bret, nor of that crowning and completely damning sin, repudiation of the Faith, Monsieur de Bergerac acknowledged many regrets. In lucid retrospection he could direct his mind upon the authentic reason for his failure as a popular figure of his times, and he beheld it in his own subjective rancour against Nature which had jested with the composition of his face and cursed him with a heroic nose. This nose which, in a man of normal objectivity of temper, might actually have served as an introduction to friendly communion had caused its possessor all his life long to call society to account for something which, to society, had been at worst no more than a diverting physical incongruity. It had poisoned Monsieur de Bergerac's pleasure in living; and, dying, Monsieur

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de Bergerac considered nothing in matter to be of sufficient importance to accomplish for any man so abominable a disservice. Somehow, in the morbid sensitiveness of his nature, a nature further altered by a psycho-pathological condition, caused by this same nose, he had attributed all his misfortunes to it, forgetting that Scarron's person was a monstrosity and yet had been unable to twist to a distorted grievance the homunculus's outlook upon life.

During the times of his strength it had seemed logical to Monsieur de Bergerac that the public should reject the writings of a man cursed with a nose like that of an Italian Arlecchino, but at Sannois, in his last hours, with the July sun a bar of gold from window to bed, he saw clearly that if he had been during his lifetime a failure as a popular dramatist or as an acclaimed philosophical and satirical author, it had been because he had willed it so. This after-vision distressed him because it brought with it the inescapable conviction that his career had been precisely symbolized by his tragic combat with Fagotin, the accomplished monkey of Brioché. Society, as had Fagotin, had rather sought the orange of friendliness than violence, and in the end had been forced to protect itself by closing its ranks against him. As to his nose, had he but forgotten

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it, his known reputation both in the armies and in Paris would have forbidden its discussion, and it had been himself who had forced with a sword blade its notable dimensions down the gullet of public consciousness.

Not that Monsieur de Bergerac, to whom the harsh sound of steel on steel had been for sixteen years the plainsong of existence, regretted his duels or the death of the men whom he had killed. He had fought for the most part upon honest quarrels and had never been a bully or a professional swordsman at the beck of purses or promises of preferment. Once indisputably the first blade with the Flanders forces, master of fence for more than a decade in a city where men unsheathed with as little compunction as though they were drawers tapping wine, it had been unreasonable in Monsieur de Bergerac to have thought save with pride upon his achievements upon the ground, but he grieved that he had employed his ability to the discomfiture of his friends. Had he not been so formidable a practitioner with the rapier his frantic quarrels with the Libertins had long been mended, but in the ferocity of his expressions to Chapelle and Tristan and Linières, he had convinced these that it were folly to approach him. D'Assoucy, he reflected now with sorrow, had taken him so literally at his

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word that the aging, fearful troubadour lay still in Rome under the unpleasant supervision of the Holy Office.

He had, Monsieur de Bergerac finally concluded, lived all his life with the intemperance of youth. Age had never distilled the passions of swift resentments or baseless suspicions into a reflective tolerance nor taught him that Society had problems of its own, the solutions of which forbade its ceaselessly meddling with those of only one of its units. All his life long he had been maniacally confident that the eyes of the world had been trained upon him, upon his nose, his sword play, his writings, his relationships with his friends or his mistresses. In his last and swift decline he perceived with a destructive clarity that, while the world had been prepared to accept him as a great swordsman, an able writer, a courageous thinker, he had forced it to accept him as a madman capable of astounding villainies and so finally to reject him. As his weakness increased upon him he was lost in amazement at the revelation thus discovered to him that it had been his own image of himself that he had forced upon the world.

Nevertheless, Monsieur de Bergerac was not overwhelmed with bitterness in the substance of these regrets. He was confident that the generation

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would come into being that would perceive distinction in his comedy, genius, however ungoverned, in his *Other World*, and authentic beauty and philosophic thought in his tragedy. He required, he told his cousin, not the consolation of a faith in immortality for his own weary soul, but for his works, and such a faith he came finally to have. Cherishing this, he could allow his mind to dwell pleasantly on days when that "gaillard de Bergerac" had been as well known as Gassion from Flanders to the Champagne and when gentlemen of blood and a dozen quarterings had called him to serve them for the sake of honour. That spirit in him which, in his twenties, had urged the composition of the ballad of "Le Brave Cyrano," was renewed as approaching dissolution sheared away the soberer humours of later years, and in the wheeling landscapes of his mind it was the figure not of Gassendi but of Carbon de Casteljaloux who beckoned or seemed in speech with him, and was grown memorable.

He would, of course, have no priest at the end, and when his ears caught the sound of familiar prayers intoned by the household beyond the door, said, as one preparing to engage upon a signal, "*Ça y est, messieurs, allons, allons!*" It was perhaps, as though Death had said to him "on guard!" and then deferred a little, in the manner

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of a resourceful duellist before falling on with fougue, to thrust once and make an end. Monsieur de Bergerac considered Death with a defiant yet a friendly eye as many a lesser swordsman had considered him, and if he had found finally his match it was "*à bonne guerre*" that he surrendered when, breathing deeply, he breathed no more.

"Wednesday, the twenty-eighth of July, one thousand six hundred and fifty-five, was deceased Savinien de Cyrano, Écuyer, Seigneur de Bergerac, son to the defunct Abel de Cyrano, Écuyer, Seigneur de Mauvières near Chevreuse, and of the damoiselle Espérance Bellanger, his wife, and upon the next day, the twenty-ninth of the same month and year, was inhumed in the church of this parish."

Thus did the registrar of the township of Sannois, near Argenteuil, keep his records complete, excluding, however, from his transcript of events upon the day of burial the posthumous defeat of the last of the Libertins. For upon that day there came in post-haste from Paris Maître Henri Le Bret in company with the very reverend Mother de Sénaux, called Marguerite de Jésus, and the pious Baroness de Neuville, who ennobled the ceremony with their devotions and pious invocations, and who composed for Monsieur de Ber-

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gerac an epitaph which asserted that he had now mounted to the skies. Which, if it were true, was contrary certainly to his expectations and possibly to his hopes and might have inspired his old friend Poquelin to write a tragi-comedy entitled "Le Chrétien Malgré Lui."

THE END

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